CARLOTA OF THE RANCHO

EVELYN RAYMOND

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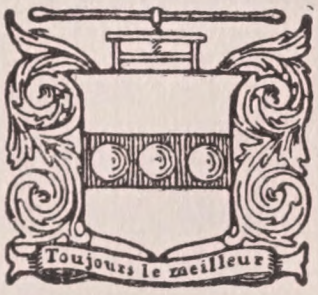
CARLOS AND CARLOTA

Carlota of the Rancho

BY EVELYN RAYMOND

AUTHOR OF

"POLLY THE GRINGO"
"MY LADY BAREFOOT," ETC.



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CARLOTA OF THE RANCHO

CHAPTER I

BORDER LAND

"My head is in the United States and my feet are in Mexico!" cried Carlos sprawling at ease upon the sun-warmed grass.

Whereupon Carlota, not to be outdone in anything, promptly rolled her plump little person over the sward until its length lay along a lime-line running due east and west across the plain. Her yellow curls touched her twin's yet her body formed a right angle to his. Then she remarked:

"Pooh! I'm better than that! My heart is in my own country and my—my—What is it that's on the other side of you from your heart, brother?"

"I don't know. Maybe gizzard."

Carlota sat up, amazed and indignant.

"Girls don't have gizzards, Carlos Manuel. Only chickens and geeses and things like those. You haven't paid attention when my father teached you."

Carlos laughed; so merrily and noisily that old Marta came to the door of the adobe house to see what was the fun. Nobody knew the housekeeper's real age, it was so very great. None could remember things so far back as she, but she had ceased to count the years long, long ago, why not? What matter, if she still had the heart of a child, yes?

Certainly, neither Carlos nor Carlota cared. To them she had never changed, either in appearance or kindness, and they found no birthdays worth remembering except their own. These only, probably, because of the gifts and *fiestas* [1] then made upon the whole rancho.

"Perhaps, I didn't, little sister, but neither did you, or you'd never have said 'geeses' nor 'teached'."

"Both of us was wrong, weren't we?" returned the girl, with as fine a disregard of grammar as of ill temper. "We'll be more 'tentive

[1] Festivals.

when our father comes home, won't we? When will that be, Carlos?"

It was a perplexing question, and the boy put it aside, as he put all difficulties, until a more convenient season. Crossing his arms above his head, he gazed unblinkingly upward into the brilliant sky, proposing:

"Let's find things in the clouds, Carlota. I see a ship, I do, truly. It's just like the pictures in the books. All its sails are set and flying. Oh! can't you see? Right there? There! It's moving northward fast—fast! It might be the ship in which our father will come home."

He meant to comfort her, but Carlota would not look up. She could not. The sunbeams made prisms of the teardrops on her lashes and blinded her. She buried her face in the grass to escape these tiny "rainbows," and all at once fell to sobbing bitterly.

Carlos hated that. He hated anything dark or unhappy. He sat up and patted his sister's shoulder, soothingly, entreating:

"There, don't! Don't, girlie. Our father wouldn't like it if he should come home now, this minute, and find you crying."

The words were magic. Carlota sprang to her feet and earnestly peered into the distance, crying:

"Is he? Do you see him, brother? Do you?"

Carlos, also, leaped up and threw his arm about her waist:

"I didn't say that, did I? I only said 'if.' "

"I don't like 'ifs,' " sobbed Carlota.

"Oh, Carlota, don't cry. You shall not. If you do I will go away myself, to the northwest, to find my father."

"Oh! let's!"

"I said 'I.' Not you. Girls never go anywhere, because they always cry. If it hadn't been for that my father might have taken me with him. You see, he couldn't take you, on account of it; and he couldn't leave you at home with only Marta and the men, for then—that would make more tears. So I had to stay to take care of you, and I do think, if I were a girl, the very first thing I would do—I wouldn't cry. Criers never have real good times, I guess."

This was logic, and from Carlos, whom Carlota idolized only less than their absent father,

most convincing. She winked very fast and drew her sleeve across her eyes, to dry the drops which would not be shaken off.

"I—I won't cry any more, brother; that is, not where anybody can see me."

"Can't you manage not to do it at all. It's so dreadfully silly. It doesn't bring father back; does it?"

"No—o," assented the other, with a catch in her voice.

"Nor—Oh! brother! If you won't, you won't, so that's a dear, and don't let's talk any more about it. One—two—three! Who is first at the corral shall have first ride on Benoni!"

Now, Carlos was an honorable boy, if a rather lazy and pompous one, so he waited until his sister had placed her feet exactly alongside his own, on that convenient lime-line, before he repeated:

"One—two—three! Off!"

Like arrows they sped across the plain, past the ancient adobe which was their home, and again old Marta hobbled to its door to watch the sturdy little figures, graceful as all other wild, young creatures of that wide, free land.

Yet they looked more like children of some Indian race, which disdained the dress of civilization, than of white and cultured people. Unshorn and bare headed, their yellow curls floated backward over shoulders clad in kid-skin. Each wore a costume of the same pattern, save that Carlota's tunic reached to her knees, while her brother's was cut short at the waist, where a sash of crimson was loosely knotted. At the ankles, their leather leggings were met by gaily embroidered moccasins; and, indeed, their whole garb was simple and comfortable, though exquisitely fine and dainty, and had been designed by their father to meet the needs of the peculiar life they led.

"Together!" shouted Carlos, as they reached their goal; and Carlota's delight in thus equalling her brother banished all lonely thoughts. She did not suspect, nor he tell her, that her twin had purposely shortened his steps to suit her own. Instead, he proposed:

"Let's ride him together! I heard Miguel talking about a 'shearing,' this morning."

"Oh! let's!"

"Then run to Marta for a bit of luncheon while I bridle Benoni. Tell her we may not be

home till nightfall, for father said we were never to worry the dear old thing—so don't forget that, and be sure to bring a lot of her freshest *bollos.*" [1]

Carlota had already started, but paused astonished to ask:

"Why, brother, does old Marta ever worry? I didn't know it. Worrying is what my father does sometimes, isn't it? When people come to talk to him about their troubles?"

Carlos felt that any conversation with the word "father" in it was to be avoided, so answered indifferently:

"Oh! not really worry, you know. She wouldn't do that about me; nor about you, if I were with you. And I s'pose I'm master of the rancho when my father"—but there was that word forcing itself in again, and the boy hurried past it to add, convincingly: "A master, a Don or a Señor, a gentleman, always looks out for the comfort of all his old women and little girls."

They would never get the delectable *bollos* at this rate! For the mood and manner which had fallen upon her twin was so new to Carlota that

[1] Cakes.

she could only stand and stare at his swaggering movements. Seeing this, he promptly assumed his natural manner, which was not that of a care-taker, and, springing to Benoni's back laid himself down along it while, clasping the animal's beautiful neck, he rode out of the corral.

Again standing at her doorway, old Marta awaited the children's approach, reflecting:

"Ah! little ones! So it is always. The easy things of life fall to my Carlos, by right, is it not? While to thee, *nina,* the speeding feet of my service, the burden and the care. But not yet, heart of mine. Look not so at Marta with thy great eyes. There shall be no care for thee, beloved, while I live. What do I hear? *Bollos?* Sweets? Not home till nightfall? *Caramba!* With whom, then, shall I play when all my tasks are done? *Si,*[1] I know. I will take me my guitar and I will to myself sing, why not. But to myself, *en verdad,*[2] quite to my own self."

Now, this wise old dame knew that nothing would more easily lure her charges home in good season than this suggestion of songs and guitar.

[1] Yes. [2] In truth.

To hear old Marta sing, in her cracked and toothless voice, was the funniest experience of their gay young lives. It was rarely she could be prevailed upon to so amuse them and Carlota hesitated and called to Carlos:

"Brother, did you hear that? This is the night when Marta sings. If we shouldn't get back in time! But—they will be shearing for many days to come."

"So will our Marta sing, at any hour, to please her 'heart's dearest'!" retorted the boy, laughing and sitting upright upon Benoni, while he bowed so profoundly that he lost his balance and slipped to the ground, at the old woman's feet.

"Woulds't jeer at thy Marta, woulds't thou?" she demanded, and playfully cuffed him. Then, laughing as merrily as they, she swung Carlota up into her brother's place, exclaiming: " 'Tis thou, soul of my life, shall ride 'before' this day!"

She seized the loosened bridle just in time. Another instant and Benoni would have been off over the plain for a wild gallop with the now rising wind. He, too, was young and full of caprice as these other children—golden-haired

and gray. None of the four knew any other home than Refugio, that cluster of venerable adobe buildings, nor much further restraint than the needs of nature imposed.

To live always in the open, save when hunger or drowsiness drove them indoors, to love all men and fear none—such was their habit. As yet, of things deeper than habit only Marta ever thought, and she but seldom. Their moods were their rulers and the present mood of the twins was for a long holiday at the sheep-shearing, a dozen miles away.

So, indulgent Marta brought out her finest basket—of such exquisite workmanship that it could be folded like a cloth, yet so tightly woven it would hold water—and packed it with a generous luncheon. Yet, as she finished her task, she lifted her face and sniffed suspiciously, saying:

"Ha! The wind rises faster. That is not good. There may be a 'norther.' Best safe at home, to-day, my children. To-morrow, *manana,* there will yet be the shearing."

"Of course, Marta. Didn't s'pose they could finish it in one day, did you? This year there

are more sheep than ever and my father—"

Carlos paused and glanced at his sister. That day, it seemed as if he couldn't open his lips without mentioning that absent loved one, which was natural enough. Their father was the center of their existence, and for the first time in their memories, he had been away for many days; they had not yet learned to live without him.

However, Carlota had not noticed anything save that mention of the sheep-shearing and a dreadful possibility had entered her mind concerning it. Impatient to be away, she exclaimed:

"Never mind the wind, Marta, dear. It's delicious, for the sun is so hot. But if you fear a 'norther,' just please give us our blankets and sombreros and let us go. Do you know, I haven't seen—Santa Maria—this day!"

"Nor I, San Jose! Do you s'pose—would they dare—just because our father is away—"

Whatever Carlota's fear, Carlos now shared it. He added his entreaties to hers and Marta limped into the house after their little Navajo blankets and sombreros, which they put between

them upon Benoni's back, while Carlos cried:

"Now we're ready for anything that comes. Don't sing till we get home, dear Marta, and—*Adios! Guay, Benoni! Vamos!*" [1]

[1] "Farewell. Take care, Benoni! Go on!"

CHAPTER II

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

Before they had ridden far, Carlos, whom Marta had laughingly compelled to take the place behind his sister, reached over her shoulder and laid his hand upon the bridle rein, saying:

"Wait, Carlota. Turn him around. I want to go to the schoolroom and get my *riata* [1] and my little hammer."

"Let's! I'll get my posy-box, too. Maybe we'll find some nice new things to show our father—when he comes home," she wistfully answered.

"Of course!" assented the boy, wheeling Benoni about, only to pull him up again in sheer amazement.

Upon the plain before them was a group of four persons, neither Indians, neighbors, nor any white settlers whom the children knew, though

[1] Lasso.

the two burros were of the familiar type of *vaqueros*[1] employed upon their own rancho. The other two strangers were mounted upon fine horses and wore queer clothing, once white, but now soiled and travel-stained. On their heads were curious canvas helmets with green linings and floating, gauzy veils. Also, these two men carried monster umbrellas of white and green, which strange articles nearly sent Benoni into convulsions. He trembled like an aspen, and his suffering promptly restored Carlota's own composure. She soothed him in her gentlest accents:

"There, there, my darling! Whoa, my pretty! Dearest beastie, don't you fear, heart of my life! Carlota will take care of Benoni, So she will!"

Carlos could only sit and stare, his curiosity increasing when the foremost rider of the group burst into a hearty laugh of relief and amusement. Then he exclaimed:

"So, you two ferocious creatures are not young Indians, after all! But pray tell me if this is a land where the girls act as guides and protectors to their brothers."

[1] Herdsmen.

Neither child fully understood this speech, yet Carlos perceived that, for the second time that day, he was being ridiculed. First, by old Marta, and now by this stranger. This made him forget that cardinal virtue of instant and unquestioning hospitality in which he had been trained and to retort:

"If people do not like the land and its customs they needn't come into it, no! As for girls 'protecting'—Pooh! Everywhere men who are men are brave as they are tender and, my father says, to be indulgent is not weakness, always."

The stranger's amusement had given place to a frank admiration of the beautiful boy thus arrogantly assuming manhood's airs, even in part deserving them. Also, the younger gentleman courteously asked:

"Will you kindly tell me, little lady, if there is water near at hand? We are all very thirsty."

"Surely. Right here in the schoolroom. It is but a tiny way—. Only those queer things—Benoni—I'd show you if it wasn't for them. I'll show you, anyway. Here, Carlos!" and with a swift, graceful movement the girl tossed the bridle toward her brother and slipped to

the ground. Then lightly catching the bit-ring of the questioner's horse, she ran forward at a pace which compelled the animal she led to trot. "Right yonder, where the osiers grow, is the most delicious spring of water in all New Mexico. So my father thinks."

Everybody now followed Carlota, even Benoni; though he planted his forefeet firmly every once in a while as if protesting against the cruelty of his young master in thus forcing him to keep so near those terrible umbrellas; but, fortunately, by the time they reached the spring these obnoxious things had been furled and laid upon the ground.

"The basket, brother! The basket—hurry!" cried the little girl, promptly emptying its precious cakes upon the grass as he tossed it to her. Then she filled it with water and offered it to him who had first complained of thirst.

"Thank you, little lady, but my father needs it most. All the time he suffers from the heat and dryness, and is always ready for a drink. Though I doubt if he has ever used a cup so odd and pretty."

"Beg pardon, but it isn't a cup. It's a

basket. Old Marta made it. She can make some even beautifuller."

"Indeed? What a skillful Marta she must be! This is the finest basket I ever saw." Then, receiving the utensil from his father's hand he dipped and offered it to the two Mexican servants. Afterward he quenched his own thirst, which must have been intense, for he drank so deeply before he finished.

"There! I thought you were a gentleman, if the other's not," remarked the observant Carlota, with satisfaction.

"Eh? Thank you, but I must claim that my father is, also, a gentleman."

"Why then did he make Carlos get angry?"

"Maybe because he's very tired and not used to boys. Where is the schoolroom you mentioned?"

"Why—this. We're in it, now."

The young man whistled in surprise, and exclaimed:

"Well, truly, this is a remarkable country! An out-of-door schoolroom. Is the sun your teacher?"

"My father is our teacher. Course, he knows everything there is, I guess."

"What is his name? I like to know wise people, though they are very scarce."

"Adrian Manuel. My brother is Carlos and I am Carlota Manuel. We are twins, though he is so much bigger than me."

Again the stranger whistled, then hastily called to the older man who had lain down in the shade of the osiers to cool and rest:

"Father! We've struck the very spot!"

That gentleman arose with surprising quickness, exclaiming:

"What! Is this the Refugio Rancho?"

"Yes, Señor," answered Carlos who had shown the Mexicans a pool beyond the spring where they could water their animals and who now returned to stand beside his sister, with his arm about her shoulders.

"Does you father live here, son?"

"Course."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"What's that? I have come a long, long distance on purpose to see, and talk with him. I've written him a score of letters without avail, so now I'll try what word of mouth will do,"

answered the elder gentleman, with considerable sharpness.

"When he comes home he'll be glad to talk with you. He always likes to talk with strangers and makes them welcome. I forgot that when I lost my temper. I beg your pardon, Señor."

Don't mention it, lad. But allow me to say that, upon my word, you're the queerest little chap I ever met. Indian clothes, Spanish graces, and Yankee bluntness. So this is Refugio, at last! Hmm, hmm. Well, well, well! Where is the house!"

"Yonder, Señor, among the palms and olives that partly hide it. There is a rise of ground that way, too. Would you like to go there now?" asked Carlos, once more the courteous small host his father would have approved.

"Presently, thank you. But I find this rest and shade delightful. My! It's a hot country! Sit down on the grass here and tell me all you know about Refugio."

Both children laughed aloud at that, Carlos replying:

"It would take till nightfall! Why, I could

talk about our dear Refugio 'forever and a day' and not have done. You see, Señor, it's such a very old place. My father says it is one of the most ancient landmarks. A landmark is, if you don't know—I didn't—one of the boundaries of a country or its history. Old Refugio is both.''

The boy was as eager to discuss this beloved subject as the newcomers were to listen, but Carlota quietly interposed:

''If brother once begins to talk about Refugio and the things which have happened here he won't know how to stop. Yet my father says that travelers are always hungry when they get here, we live so far from any other rancho. So, if you won't go to the house yet, will you have some of our cakes here?''

Gathering up the cakes and loaves she had emptied from the basket, she proffered them to the strangers, beginning with the gray haired man as she had seen his son do with the water.

''Yes, thank you. Though it's not long since we stopped to eat, those cakes smell very appetizing. Let us all sit about the spring and enjoy them together. So, this is your schoolroom. What do you learn in it?'' he asked.

"I could better tell you what we don't. First, there's geography. See that white line?"

"Yes. It suggests a tennis-court. What is it for?"

Carlos sprang up and merrily bestrode the line-mark, crying:

"One leg is in my native land and one upon foreign soil! That's the way my father says it. This—" putting his hand upon a tuft of grass—"is in Mexico. This other in the United States. Our rancho is the southeast boundary of our own country. Our house was built hundreds of years ago by the good priests who came to teach the Pueblos about our Lord. That's why they named it Refugio, the House of Refuge. Because it wasn't only to help folks to go to Heaven, it was to give them shelter when they were persecuted. Somebody must always have been fighting then, I think."

"So history says. Do you learn that, too?" inquired the younger gentleman.

"Yes. Not out of books, though. Father says we're to study that way, later. Now, he just brings out old Gaudalupo—who's a hundred and fifteen years—and, sometimes, Marta, and makes them what he calls his 'texts.' He

says that they're living history. Carlota and I are history-makers, too. If we should live as long as those old folks somebody might find us just as interesting as we do them."

"Far more so, maybe. I find you extremely interesting even now. I would like to hear a great deal about your lives and doings."

Carlos thoughfully studied the young gentleman's face, then asked:

"Would you, really? How strange that seems—just children like us. Let me see. We learn Spanish and behavior—when we don't forget it—from the Mestizas. They are never, never rude. Even when they stab a man in the back they do it courteously. So Miguel says."

"What? What! You dreadful child! Are you taught stabbing, also, in this modern school of philosophy?" demanded the elder Mr. Disbrow, nervously glancing toward his dark-skinned servants.

Carlos rolled upon the grass, boisterously laughing. Then, suddenly remembering the "courtesy" which he boasted of having studied, sat up and apologized.

The apology accepted, the inquiry followed:

"Do you like to speak the Spanish you are taught?"

"Oh! I love it! You can say such things in it. They seem to mean more, 'specially if you're angry. But our father doesn't wish us to use it very much. He says we must first acquire pure English. He is very particular himself. But isn't it hard to be grammar–y?" asked Carlota, not to be left out of the conversation.

"Very. Yet, I think your father couldn't have greatly objected to the Spanish, since he gave you such pretty Spanish names," answered Mr. Rupert.

"That was our mother's doing. She named us. See? That is where she sleeps. That is her grave."

The little girl stood up and pointed to a clump of agave plants, in the midst of which rose a flower-decked mound, with a simply-inscribed, natural boulder at its head.

After a hasty exchange of glances, with one impulse, the strangers rose and quietly walked to the spot Carlota had designated. For a little time they stood there, with bowed heads, as if doing reverence to the slumbering dust below,

then gravely turned away. They did not again sit down in the "schoolroom" and, immediately, Mr. Rupert asked the children to guide them to the house.

For the first time in their lives the twins regarded their mother's resting place with feelings of awe, inspired by the solemn manner of these strangers. She had died when they were babies, but their father had kept alive in their hearts a consciousness of her existence as real as it was joyous.

Their happy mother, young, beloved, and beautiful; who had sung and laughed her way through life, and who had trustfully gone out of it to another which was even fuller of sunshine. Why should anybody grow stern and sad who looked down upon her grave?

They could not fathom the mystery, and soberly led the way to the old adobe Mission, which had been a House of Refuge for so many strangers.

"I think, Carlota, maybe these are the 'enemy' sort of folks Miguel so often talks about, and seems to expect will come, sometime to Refugio," impressively whispered Carlos.

"'Enemies' are wicked people, isn't they?"

"Ye–es. I be–lieve so;" yet the boy's tone was doubtful. If these were "enemies" they appeared to be more queer than wicked.

"Hmm. Then that is why."

"Why what, girlie?"

"Why they wear such funny hats on their heads and carry such strange things in their hands. Don't you remember that in all the stories of bad ones there's always something to know them by? Marks on their foreheads, or ugly clothes or faces; and now those have—I wonder what they call these horrid greeny-white open-and-shutters that scared Benoni so! You see, brother, he knew they were 'enemies' at once. Horses do know lots about such things, Marta says."

"They are 'sunumberellas.' I asked the gentleman," answered Carlos, proud of this acquisition to his "pure English."

"Then whenever I see a 'sunerbell' I shall know I see an 'enemy,' too," rejoined Carlota, with conviction.

CHAPTER III

REFUGIO

Nobody living knew how old the House of Refuge was.

Gaudalupo, who seemed as native to the soil as the cacti at its gates, affirmed that it did not "grow any older." He had been born there and he had found it "just so." It had never changed.

It was an abandoned Franciscan Mission, with chapel and cloister and bell-tower. Within that square, corner belfry still hung the curious bells, each with a rude, jangling clapper between its iron discs. Tradition said that these quaint bells were rung by the ancient Padres not only to summon their neophytes to religious services but, also, to their meals; and this hospitable custom was still followed by Adrian Manuel, into whose possession as a private residence the Mission had now come.

Early in his occupation he had carefully re-

stored the half-obliterated Spanish text over the refectory door: "It is the House of Refuge. Enter and be glad, all ye who will." Thereafter, so far as lay within his power, the new master of old Refugio made that legend the rule of his own household.

So when old Marta saw the children returning so soon, accompanied by strangers, she set the fire ablaze and, at once, prepared a pot of her delicious coffee. When, putting a loaf and a knife upon the oaken table, she repaired to the doorway and, with many obeisances, awaited the party's approach.

The sight of her banished all perplexities from Carlota's mind, and she ran forward to take her own rightful place at the housekeeper's side; for, as her beloved father often told her, was she not the little mistress of his home? Thence she announced with her best manner:

"Welcome, friends. We are very happy to see you at Refugio." Yet she whispered to old Marta: "Brother and I think that these people are 'enemies,' but then they're guests, too. They have come to see my father."

The strangers politely returned the child's

salutation and again the elder Mr. Disbrow exclaimed: "So, this is Refugio!"

"Yes, Señor—Mister Stranger, and I hope you will like it," answered Carlota.

The younger gentleman now made a formal presentation:

"This is Mr. George Griswold, my father; and I am Rupert, his son. Maybe you have heard of us, Miss Carlota."

"No, Mr. Rupert, never. Did you ever see our father?"

"I have not, but my father knew him very well."

"How delightful! Isn't he—Didn't you love him dearly?" she eagerly demanded of the elder man.

"Hmm. I can't say that there was any affection between us."

At this reply Carlota drew back, chilled; but Mr. Rupert immediately began to speak of her beautiful home and its curiosities and for her, as for Carlos, there was no theme more beloved.

Forgetting her annoyance she hastily began to lead her guest about the ancient buildings, descanting upon every object they passed with such eagerness that she thereby greatly con-

fused his ideas concerning them. So that he pleaded:

"Slowly, little lady, please. It's all so wonderful to me I want to take it carefully. This was the refectory, you say. Do you still use it for a dining hall?"

"Yes, oh! yes. And, sometimes, after the shearing and such things when we have everybody here to a *fiesta,* it is just full of people. Oh! I love it then! and so does my father. But—now shut your eyes! Please shut them just a minute and don't open them till I tell you, and I'll show you the 'loveliest spot on earth,' my father says."

Her enthusiasm won his compliance with her whim and, like a boy at play, he followed her blindfold down many passages and through the breezy cloister, till she paused and cried: "Now, look! Quick!"

Then he raised his lids but promptly dropped them again, to clear his bewildered vision.

"Oh! Señor, isn't it beautiful?"

"Beautiful, indeed! It is a miracle! It is a paradise!"

"Oh! no. It is my mother's garden," said Carlota, simply.

"But your mother is dead, long ago," responded Mr. Rupert, in surprise.

"She has only gone to Heaven. Father and I are taking care of it for her. He does all the heavy work, because the water-cans are too big for me, though we have a fine little water-wagon that we roll around from place to place. But I, myself, prune and cut every plant that needs it. They are from almost all the countries in the world, and some of them have cost my father much, much money. Many have cost nothing but a nice ride or tramp after them. All the things my mother put here, herself, are still alive. Nothing can help living because we so love everything that grows; and, besides, the climate is perfect, my father says," finished the little girl.

Truly it was a wonderful place, this old court of the monastery. Its southern, open side was a hedge of the prickly pear, which the wise Franciscans had found a natural and safe barricade against the troublous Indians. This hedge was much taller than Carlota's head and was more than eight feet in width. Its lower branches were curiously gnarled and twisted and as thick as a man's arm, while every por-

tion bristled with strong spines more difficult to force than bayonet-points, they were so closely interwoven and needle-sharp. Mr. Rupert would have tarried long before this ancient hedge, but his small guide would not so allow.

"See those palms and olives? They are as old as old! Like Refugio itself. But the roses yonder came from France only this last year. And right here—look! These are anemones from my mother's own childhood's home. She had them sent after her when she came here."

"And living still!"

"Surely. Do you s'pose we'd ever let them die? God had to have her in His Heaven, but He left us her garden. My father—"

"Your 'father' is your idol, isn't he?"

"My idol? Father? How queer!" The idea was so amusing that the child clapped her hands and laughed aloud. She had been used to hearing the literal truth and "idols" suggested something most grotesque. Cried she: "Come! I'll show you. We have a lot, from the Pueblos, and Old Mexico, and everywhere. There is a room just for them, the ugly, hideous things!"

She made him look at them every one. Cheap

little images of red clay, or stone, with some that were more pretentious; and as he examined them his astonishment continually grew. Not at the curious carving, for the "collection" was not extensive, but at the characteristics of this unknown Adrian Manuel, whom he had heard described as "beneath contempt."

However, his reflections were cut short, not only by Carlota's eagerness to show him more of the Mission but by the entrance of a man who might be either a "cow boy" or a Mexican brigand, to judge from his appearance.

And now, for the first time in her life, Carlota heard Miguel Cardanza speak otherwise than courteously to a guest. He brusquely asked:

"Señor, will you tell me your business here?"

Mr. Rupert showed a brief surprise, then quietly answered:

"I accompany my father, Mr. George Disbrow, upon an unfamiliar journey to accomplish a certain task. I will leave him to explain what that is. Are you Adrian Manuel?"

"His trusted friend and *major domo*,[1] Miguel Cardanza, at your service;" but the haughty salutation which accompanied these

[1] Steward.

words evinced that such "service" would be grudgingly performed.

"When will your master return?"

"Señor, at his own good pleasure."

"We will, I presume, await that season, trusting it will not long be postponed."

"That is as may be. But I must, on his behalf, request you to leave Refugio immediately. Yes, yes, little one. I know you marvel to hear such rudeness from your Miguel's lips. Yet I am right, yes. I know what I do. Well, Señor?"

"But Mr. Cardanza, I protest. Though he might not care to receive us I doubt if even your master would turn us adrift in this sparsely settled land. We have traveled many miles since daybreak, yet this is the first shelter we have seen."

"Señor, you traveled in the wrong direction, that is all. There are settlements in plenty. That way, thus—" pointing toward the northeast—"lives a man who takes in pilgrims for a price. He is a hungry miner, and an hour's ride will bring you to his shack. It is the only inn this side Lanark."

Carlota had been a silent listener to this

dialogue but she now interrupted it with:

"Miguel, you shall not send any weary man away. Even if he were—were the evil one, this was once God's House, and it is still Refugio. Miguel Cardanza, I shall tell my father about you when he comes home. Oh! if he came now! What would he say to you but: 'Good Miguel, hot-headed as ever?' Oh! I know. I've heard him, often, often. Do be a nice old Miguel, do—"

The Spaniard flushed but caught the child's hand and whispered in her ear. She listened with impatience, amazement, and, at last, with wild alarm. Then, darting one terrified glance toward the unfortunate Mr. Rupert, vanished from the cloister, shrieking, as she ran:

"Carlos! Carlos! Brother! My brother! For our father's sake come—come quick—quick!"

CHAPTER IV

WHAT SERVES, SERVES

Miguel was the trusted and capable manager of Refugio Rancho, and, also, he knew something of its owner's private affairs. What he did not know he surmised and not always correctly. He knew that Mrs. Manuel, an orphan, had married against the will of the wealthy eccentric aunt who had reared her; and that this old Mrs. Sinclair had never forgiven Adrian Manuel for his share in the affair, and had harshly accused him of seeking her money as well as her niece, whom she promptly disinherited.

Then, after the death of the young wife, she suddenly demanded possession of "her Mary's children;" alleging that their father was unfit to "raise them in the wilderness." This demand had been made in her name by her lawyers, Disbrow and Disbrow. Upon condition of Mr. Manuel's absolutely resigning them

to her she promised to educate them well and to bequeath them her fortune. Originally, the lonely old lady had asked for the children from a real desire for their affection, hoping they would fill the place in her life left empty by their mother's desertion; but when the father positively and courteously declined her offers on their behalf, her strong and wilful temper had been aroused and she determined to have them at all costs.

It had therefore developed into a mere contest of wills. The lawyers' letters grew more freq t and importunate as the years passed and, finally, she had induced the Disbrows to undertake a personal visit to Refugio in the hope of thus effecting what the numberless letters had failed to do.

Mr. Manuel's plans for his idolized children were simple and decided, and though not a wealthy man, he possessed sufficient fortune to carry them out. He intended to educate them himself up to a certain degree; then, leaving Refugio in Miguel's hands, go north with them, place them in some good co-educational college, and himself settle near them till their four years' course of study should be completed.

But, of late, something had happened to make these plans doubtful. He had not confided this doubt to Miguel, but had gone quietly away for a time until the doubt could be settled. He did not explain what this uncertainty was. He merely departed, leaving a sealed letter of instructions in his steward's hands. If at the end of two months he had not returned this letter was to be opened and its instructions implicitly followed. Meanwhile:

"You are master of Refugio while I am gone, good Miguel. And more than that you are absolute guardian of my precious children till I come and claim them from you. See to it, on your love and honor, that no harm befalls them; else, look to welcome home a broken-hearted man."

These had been Adrian Manuel's last words to his manager, as he departed on a journey more hazardous than anybody guessed, and Miguel had treasured them in his inmost heart.

Now his fealty and his honor were to be tested. Instantly, upon learning who the strangers were and realizing that they had chosen the time of his master's absence to arrive, he leaped to the conclusion that they had

come to carry by force what persuasion had failed to accomplish. In brief: they had come to kidnap the twins!

It was this belief which had inspired his rudeness to Mr. Rupert and this fear which had been whispered to little Carlota. He had bidden her seek Carlos and go with him to some safe place of hiding until such time as the strangers should grow weary of their fruitless efforts and depart. There were many, many outbuildings at Refugio. It was, indeed, as strangers always said, large enough for a regular rancheria, or village, and had been such in the old Padres' time. In some one of these many old adobes the imperilled little ones might stay till danger was past, and in whichever spot they hid he would soon find and watch over them. The main thing was for them to disappear, and at once. Alas! hasty Miguel little dreamed how literally they were to obey his commands!

It was but a few moments after the manager had whispered his caution that old Marta paused in her supper getting, and its incident scolding of young Anita, her helper, to watch the children speed past her kitchen door, and remarked:

"There they flit, yes, the children of my last days. Heart of my life, but it was fine to hear that small Carlota speak the strange Señor so fair. Anita, under her curls of gold lie the brains thou lackest, my imbecile!"

"Then if she has what belongs to me, let her restore to me my own, for her then, the indolent, would be thy unnumbered chidings. Good. 'Turn about is fair play.' Why should she always be free to run and ride while I—"

"Take that for thy insolence, kitchen-maid! Let me tell thee that in that far land whence my child's blessed mother came, the Señor Manuel of holy memory, there are—Bah! Why waste words on such? *This* is for the impudence; and *this*—because thou mindest not the *podrida*[1] but must be staring, staring at every stranger-man crossing the threshold of Refugio!"

The housekeeper's words were emphasized by a couple of heavy slaps upon Anita's broad shoulders, but the girl cared no more for the blows than for the interminable scoldings. It was all in the day's work, yes. She, too, loved her master's children, as everybody knew, and having annoyed Marta by her pretended envy

[1] Stew.

of Carlota the mischievous maid was ready to join the old woman at the door and behold what thence might be seen.

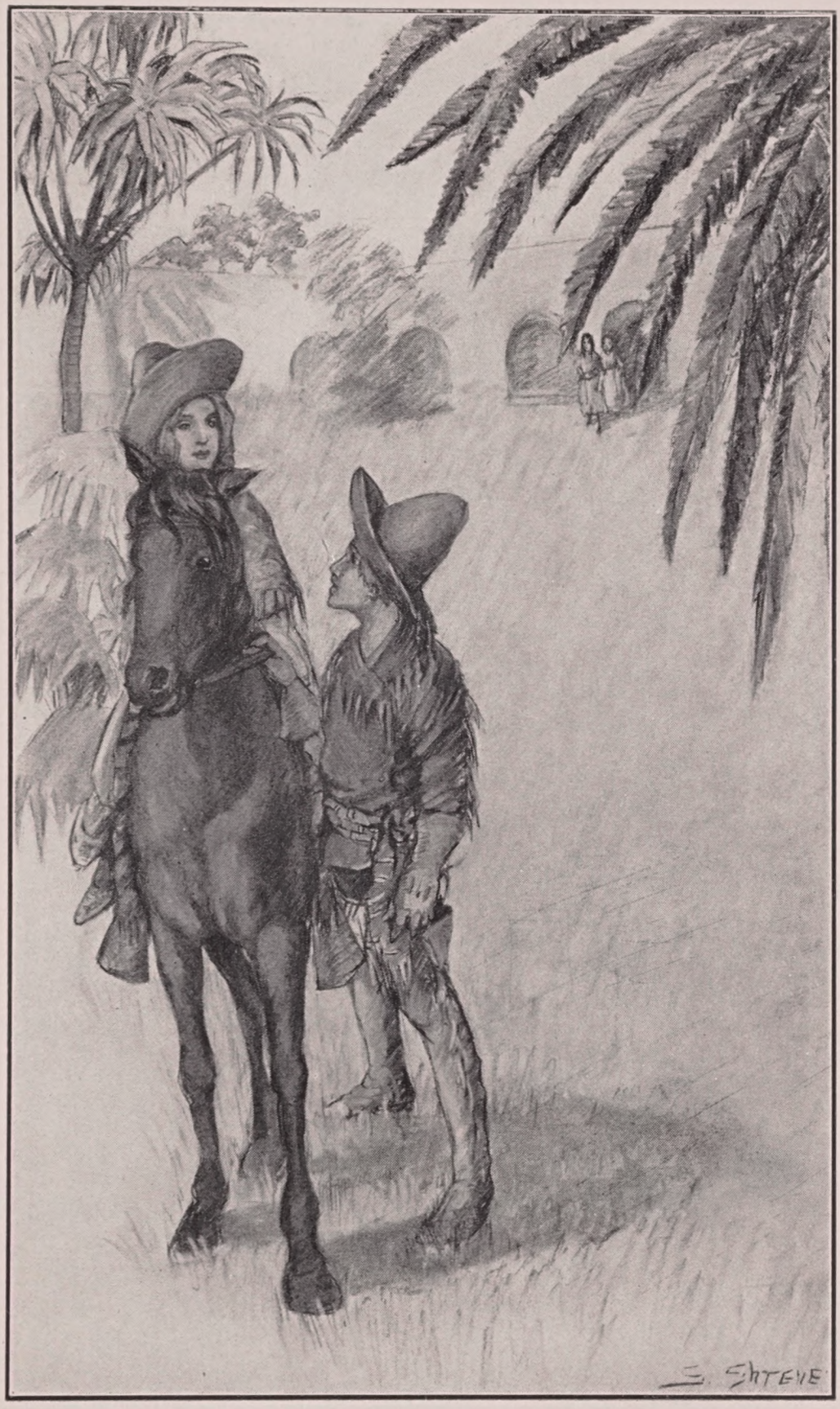
There was always something interesting. Miguel pottering about, swaggering in that authority he never allowed to lapse; a *vaquero* coming or going; now and again, a farm hand, with Mateo, the gardener; and "forever and always," the poultry-boys, chasing the fowls from the cistern.

Anita was just in time to see the twins swing themselves upon Benoni's back, where their Navajo blankets still rested. They had put on their sombreros and now, seeing the two women in the doorway, Carlos caught his off and waved it as he cried:

"*Adios!* Marta—Anita—Refugio! *Adios —ADIOS!*"

What was there in that familiar salutation that set old Marta's heart to beating trip-hammer strokes? Clapping her withered hand to her side she caught hold of Anita and whirled that young person around with an unexpected force, demanding:

"Did'st thou hear that, yes? Why do they say that? What is it?"



"ADIOS, ADIOS!"

"Leave hand! May I not hearken the last word of the little one but I must be sent to mind an old stew-pot of *podrida?*"

"*Podrida*—Pstit! Tell me. There's something amiss with my children, is it not? '*Adios*' —'farewell'—It has been often in that voice of silver, but always with the sound of 'I return,' so sweet to hear. Always with the laughter breaking through, but this time—the heart-break!"

Feeling her own superstitious heart sing before that strange expression on Marta's paling face, Anita indignantly retorted:

"You are a fanciful old woman. You are dotard. What? Have you an ague, you? Speak. Have you never seen the small ones ride away upon Benoni that you should stare at ghosts this hour?"

"Ghosts? Yes. I dreamed of their mother last night. She was not weeping and wringing her white hands, no? Anita Pichardo, I tell thee that evil has come to Refugio this day, and it is the strangers who have brought it."

She paused and pointed toward Mr. Rupert, hastily coming down the cloistered walk.

"Well then, Mother Marta, it is I, Anita, who

thanks this unknown evil for coming by so handsome a carrier, yes. In truth, if it is this fine Señor I am to serve at supper I will even bother to stir the stew once more. Then I will put on my Sunday gown, why not? Many strangers have come to Refugio, but none so comely as yon."

Being something of a beauty and more of a coquette, maid Anita chose the roundabout way to her own chamber, along the veranda floor and through the cloister, casting arch glances toward the young lawyer who met her midway the passage, but noticed her not at all.

Yet her trouble was not useless for, at the turn of the corridor, she came upon Miguel and one of the Mexicans who had arrived in the Griswolds' company. They were talking in Spanish and Anita did not scruple to pause and hearken; and what she overheard worked the customary mischief of all half-truths, and she exclaimed:

"Santa Maria! It is so, then. Old Marta was right! They knew, those small ones, my heart's delights! and they have run away! Yes, yes, I understand! It was '*Adios,*' indeed. But—"

Her coquetry now forgotten, Anita hurried back to the kitchen by the shortest route; and, muttering something which Marta did not comprehend, caught off the pot of stew from its hook in the fireplace. Hastily emptying the mess into a handled jar, she seized a loaf from the table and rushed away. The whole transaction had so amazed the housekeeper that she was speechless till, as the flutter of the maid's scarlet petticoat waved defiance from the door-yard, her voice returned:

"Anita! AN-I-TA! Eyes of my soul, is she daft, that one? *An—i—ta!* AN—I—I—TA!"

"Fortune favors the daring." Miguel's horse Amador stood tethered near; for, when a chance passer-by had reported meeting strangers presumably bound for Refugio, the manager had left the shearing-place and hurried homeward, to find there the most unwelcome guests who had ever sought its shelter.

"*Hola!* Amador! That is good, yes. This jar grows heavy, and thy feet are swifter than mine!" cried Anita, and mounted. So daringly up and away—on Miguel's own Amador which none but he must ride!

"They have all gone mad!" shrieked Marta, while Miguel entered the kitchen and indignantly demanded:

"Mother, what ails the women? First the little Carlota; I but whisper to her that which she should know and off she flies, screaming, louder than I dreamed she could. Then comes Anita where she had no business, listens what concerns her not, and off she races, likewise screaming. Now thou—if—what?"

"The *podrida*—the supper, heart's idol!" wailed the housekeeper, and her sorely tried son burst into a laugh, which she arrested by a gesture and the words:

" 'He laughs best who laughs last,' and that won't be my Miguel, no. For the guests of the master to lose their supper, that is one thing, indeed; but what of Amador, no?"

Now Amador was the delight of Miguel's soul and it needed but this suggestion to send him doorward again. The horse was gone, and in fury he turned upon his unoffending mother:

"Didst thou—didst—"

"Pouf! Is it I, Marta Cardanza, at eighty years, would mount that fiend, Amador, and ride away with a dangling jar of hot stew, yes?

Such pranks suit not gray hairs, Miguel, son of my soul, no."

"But which way, mother? How dared she?"

Marta shrugged her shoulders, answering:

"Bah! Some maids are ever silly. 'Tis I think these strangers have foul-bewitched all Refugio, yes."

Yet there was a gleam of mischief in her black eyes as she pointed to where a vaquero was leading the beautiful horse that Mr. Rupert had ridden to the rancho. "Tit for tat," she quoted in her native tongue.

"Thanks, mother! That is good!"

Then, even while Mr. Rupert came onward to mount, did Miguel seize the creature before its owner's eyes and ride away as only a plainsman can ride. Instantly, the visitor turned upon his servant, like all the others—angry with the wrong person:

"Boy, what do you mean by that? Where has he gone?"

"How can I tell, Señor?"

"Why did you let him take the horse?"

"You had not so forbidden, Señor."

"Humph! I told you to bring him here—for me."

"Ten thousand pardons, Señor. To bring him here, yes. For whom—that was not mentioned."

There was no virtue in anger, so Rupert Disbrow forced a laugh; then looked up to find the youthful eyes of wrinkled Marta watching him with a keen amusement which plainly explained the affair. Crossing to where she leaned against the doorframe he lifted his helmet and asked:

"Madam, may I have a word with you?"

"Many, if it so pleases the Señor."

He looked past her into the great kitchen, through which a swiftly rising breeze swept refreshingly, and remarked:

"It feels like a storm. Do they often visit this locality?"

"When the good God wills," responded the old woman, piously.

After all, she could see but little amiss with this stranger. He had a speech and manner which reminded her of her beloved, lost Doña Mary, though she knew that he could not be of that young mistress's kin.

He presently observed, insinuatingly:

"That settle against the window, yonder, looks inviting."

"The veranda is cooler, yes."

"Then, by all means, let us sit there."

He certainly was courteous. No gentleman of old Castile could have been more deferential. He was fully equal in graciousness to Señor Adrian, himself; and, after all—the *podrida* was gone! That charge the saints had taken off an old woman's hands, yes. If there was no supper—Pouf! there was still bread in the buttery and fruit in plenty. With the master at home, there would have been fowls to kill and cook; yet—for this fair-speaking stranger? Of that Marta was not so sure; any more than she was sure of her regret for the lost *podrida*. In any case, she now willingly took the place upon the settle which the young man had earlier indicated.

"Have you lived here always, Madam?" he began.

"Always, Señor."

"Then you must have known Mrs. Manuel."

"As my own soul, yes."

"Was she a happy woman?"

"The angels in Paradise cannot be happier."

"Yet she relinquished a great deal to come here with her husband, nor had she known him long."

"A day is a lifetime when it is soul of one's soul," answered Marta, now looking steadily into his inquiring eyes with such an expression that he abruptly terminated his cross-examination.

Returning to the present and his own perplexities he said:

"That man who rode off upon my horse seems to be a sort of 'boss' here, in Mr. Manuel's absence."

"In truth, yes."

"He declines the hospitality of Refugio to us, but my father is an old man."

"He should be thinking of his sins," suggested Marta.

"I can sleep out of doors, well enough, but he can't. Besides, he is saddle-worn and can ride no further at present. What shall I do?"

"I was never good at riddles, no. My head, it is quite stupid, yes."

"But you are a woman. You should be merciful, and Refugio means 'succor.' Remember,

please, he is old and he—knew your mistress.''

She turned upon him sharply:

''But I remember, also, that he has come to bring sorrow to her innocent little ones, yes.''

''No! I tell you truly that you are wholly mistaken. Our errand is one of kindness, only. Provide us shelter for to-night and to-morrow I—''

She interrupted him by rising and saying:

''One may do what one will with one's own, is it not? It is the House of Refuge. Bring the father. He is, indeed, too old for such a task as his; but there is still time. He may repent and depart before harm is done. I repeat, it is the House of Refuge, and the sin of turning any beggar from its doors shall lie neither on the head of my beloved master nor on that of Marta Cardanza. There are rooms of my own, yes. In them—'the house is yours.' ''

CHAPTER V

A LITTLE EXCURSION

"*Basta,* enough! If some go supperless to bed this night it shall not be the little ones! *Vamos,* Amador!" cried Anita, as she struggled to keep both her difficult seat and the contents of the jar.

Now Amador was a horse of spirit, and, like his master, was called a "woman hater"; therefore, he resented the petticoat flapping against his side. Rearing, he pawed the air with his forefeet, tossed himself from side to side, and vigorously tried to shake off the obnoxious skirt.

"So? Wouldst thou? Vicious, like thy owner, *si?* Well, learn then! One day is as good as another to break thy will, and before thou wast born, imp, Anita was a horsewoman. Take that!"

With an audacity even Miguel would not have shown, the excited girl brought the hot and heavy jar down upon Amador's shoulder, and,

instantly, he stood stock still, save for a peculiar shivering through all his frame which, in itself, would have warned Miguel of evil to come.

Not inexperienced Anita. Her heart swelled with pride and mischief, as she jeered:

"Ha, ungallant! Thus easily subdued by a woman—*a woman,* Amador—Wouldst not the skirt? Then, take this for thy incivility and—forward!"

Unwisely, she again lifted the jar and dealt the beast a second blow, and, already loosened by the violent shaking, the stopper fell out and the warm contents splashed over his neck.

This was the last indignity which Amador could endure. With a spring he was off. The jar fell to the ground, broken, and for her life Anita now clung to the bridle. But he thrust his nostrils forward and jerked the reins from her grasp. Then she gripped him about the throat, half-choking him; yet the fire of his wild ancestors stirred within him and he did not stop for this. His wicked eyes glanced backward and seemed to ask:

"Wouldst ride, Anita? Then ride thou shalt till thou art content!"

She never knew how long that startling onrush lasted. It seemed an endless progress in which, each moment, destruction menaced her; then, suddenly, she found herself in the middle of a mesquite bush, her clothing torn, her face scratched and bleeding, while the footfalls of the now free Amador swiftly died in the distance.

"Ha! But you shall suffer—suffer—villain!" she cried, as soon as she could recover her breath. Then she tried to turn about, but each movement meant agony. Everywhere the sharp thorns of the shrub pierced her. To remain was impossible—to extricate herself—Ugh!

When, at last, she stood free upon the ground there was little in her appearance to recall the coquettish Anita. Yet, at that moment, a ringing laugh and mocking voice smote her ears:

"So? But you are well punished for your impudence, fair mistress of the pans, is it not? My Amador is a horse of sense. I knew it!"

It was Miguel, who had urged Rupert Disbrow's "Lady Jane" to its utmost speed and had arrived in time to witness the maid's exit

from the mesquite spines, though not to aid her. Now, seeing that she was really suffering, he dismounted and added:

"But, in truth! I am sorry! That was a nasty trick of Amador—and I had esteemed him a gentleman!"

Anita shrugged her torn shoulders, then groaned:

"There are no gentlemen left at Refugio, no! Since the Señor—my master was kind—he would not jeer—"

Her voice died in a wail and Miguel exclaimed:

"Why, child, Anita! Hush, hush! There, there! So, so, my beauty!"

"Pstit! I am not a horse—not Amador—to be soothed as a baby. He is—he is *diablo!* and thou—his master!" she retorted. Then dropped her scarred face in her hands and again began to weep.

Miguel hated tears worse than he hated women; and he laid his hand upon her arm, asking:

"Why not believe that I am truly sorry? And, in the name of reason, why stole you the stew-pot as well as the horse?"

"Why? For my children, souls of my life, indeed, yes."

"If they so choose, can they not eat their meat in their father's house?"

"Miguel Cardanza! Standest thou there and askest me that?" tragically demanded the maid.

In spite of his best intentions, Miguel laughed. Poor Anita would also have laughed if she could have seen herself; and her anger slowly oozed away before his mirth. If he were in that cheerful mood affairs could not be so bad as she had fancied from what she had overheard in the cloister. She determined to learn the real truth now, and asked:

"Miguel Cardanza, did you not say that these strangers had come to carry away our children? Did you not forbid their man to help them in their fiendish task? Oh! I heard you, I heard you. And if the master's 'friend' cares not whither he sent the frightened innocents, Anita, the humble kitchen-maid, has a heart of flesh and will follow to care for them. Even I, bruised by that vile Amador— Where are my children, Miguel Cardanza?"

"Listen, Anita! If you shed more tears

your face will be clean! If I sent the small ones away it was but for a moment, till I could speak to them more fully. Carlota is an angel. She knew not till I whispered her, that the hand she grasped so friendly had come to do her harm. Bah! girl! Your eavesdropping has wrought mischief this day!"

As their tempers cooled they had resumed their ordinary speech, changing the "thou" to "you"; and now, also, the manager realized that he had acted foolishly and might have chosen a better way to protect his charges. He was vexed with Anita for putting such stress upon the children's disappearance. Of course, they were safe somewhere near. What harm could possibly come to them except from the intriguing guests? It is natural to visit one's own fault upon somebody else and the maid afforded the readiest victim of Miguel's self-reproach.

"I tell you, silly wench, you have wrought dire mischief. What is a mess of *podrida* to our children when the whole countryside is 'sanctuary' for them. Are they not the little ones of the 'Lady of Refugio'? Is her name not still a talisman? You should not have

scared them, you! Nor lost me my priceless Amador—You—''

''I? I—scare them? I, Miguel Cardanza, when I spoke not with them at all? You are mad, I tell you. Everybody is mad this day, and as for that fiend Amador, may he never return!'' exclaimed the amazed and indignant damsel. Then drawing away from him, as he continued to help her pull the thorns from her dress, she added: ''No! aid me no more. Your courtesy follows too close upon your rudeness to be valued. I must go from here; but—how?''

She began to be amused by the situation and regarded the angry man with a curious smile. There was but one horse, and that one already far spent. Miguel Cardanza had never walked a step in his life when riding had been possible. Anita examined her torn attire and wounded hands, though these caused her little pain now, since her young and healthful blood recovered swiftly from any hurt. Yet now was a chance to test how true a ''gentleman'' was the Señor Miguel Cardanza!

Her laughing audacity nettled him and he remarked, ungraciously:

"It's miles if it's a rod. Must I walk? Can you? Well, then, bitter pills must e'en be swallowed."

With that he swung Anita upon Lady Jane and leaped into the saddle before her, then goaded the doubly-burdened animal to its swiftest pace. In this fashion and in due time the ill-assorted couple appeared before old Marta at her kitchen door, and set that astonished person trembling and gasping at the extraordinary sight, Miguel and Anita, riding double! Indeed, and indeed! They had all gone mad that day!

"Anita—the *podrida*—my son—"

During her return ride the girl had scorned to support herself by so much as a touch upon her cavalier's belt, but she now coquettishly clasped his sturdy waist and sweetly answered:

"Yes, Mother Marta, it is even so I bring back your little son quite safe. Yet I have suffered much, and it was that Amador who spilled the children's supper and— Hark!"

A shrill whistling sound silenced the words on her lips.

CHAPTER VI

THE NORTHER

"O, brother! We must ride fast, fast! We must not stop one single minute—if they should get us—why did our father go away!"

"Hush, little sister. Never fear. I am almost a man. I will take care of you."

"Boys are not men; not even 'almost' men at twelve years. But—can they still see us from Refugio?"

Turning, the child looked back. The trees and shrubbery about the venerable home they loved quite hid it from sight and the fact made her suddenly sad, so that she cried:

"Suppose, just s'pose, we should never come back?"

"Pooh! don't be silly, girlie. Course we'll go back, soon as the 'enemies' go away," answered Carlos stoutly, though he was secretly troubled by the same thought.

"What ever made them come?"

"Carlota! You told me that yourself: because they were just—'enemies.'"

"'Enemies' are wicked people, and I don't see how anybody could be wicked to our father. Do you, Carlos?"

"Oh! don't ask so many questions. I am no older than you. I can't answer them."

"You often say you are much bigger, you were 'almost a man' a minute ago. Doesn't Benoni travel splendidly?"

"Yes. But—where shall we go?"

"Why, to the shearing-place, I s'pose," she answered, doubtfully.

"We can't. They—anybody might come there. All strangers go everywhere that there's things to see, like the shearing."

"Oh! dear! I wanted to see if our lambs, Santa Maria and San Jose, had been sheared. But the men would not dare, I think. But we must go somewhere, 'to hide,' Miguel said, and —what shall we do?"

Carlos reflected; then observed:

"I can't think yet. I hate 'hiding,' any way, and on our own rancho from such polite gentlemen—I mean the Rupert-one was so. I feel sort of mean and sneaky, as I guess a coward

might. You may be a coward, Carlota, but I'm not. I've a mind to go right home and order those men to leave. If they won't, I can lock them up in—" Here he hesitated and looked questioningly at his sister.

"Lock them up—where, Carlos Manuel?"

"You needn't tremble. I haven't done it yet."

"Where could you lock them?" she sternly persisted.

Carlos fidgetted, then said:

"Girls ask so many questions!"

"And boys answer so few! You know that there's only one place in all Refugio that can be locked. Our father never turned a key on his possessions. I've heard him say that. I've heard him say the whole world was free to use what he used except—our mother's rooms. The key to those he took away. I saw him put it in his pocket and he kissed me when he did it. Carlos Manuel, would you put 'enemies' in our mother's rooms?"

Carlos evaded her piercing gaze, but answered, firmly:

"It would be worse to keep them outside, where they could hurt our father and us, than

to put them into places which nobody uses and where they could hurt nobody till they promised to be good and go away."

"Down in the inside of you, Carlos, you know that locking them up there would be the worstest thing could be. Don't you?"

"Yes, I s'pose so. I wish there was some other place."

"So do I. But, first, let's go to our mother's grave and think about it there. Maybe we'll guess just what to do, and if we should be gone a long, long time— If we should never come back at all—"

She began to cry but the lad exclaimed:

"We'll never get anywhere if you cry all the time. I never did see anybody cry as much as you do. I wouldn't be a girl for all New Mexico!"

They turned Benoni toward the flower-decked mound and the pair knelt there for a little time, each praying after his and her own habit, and feeling vastly comforted by the peaceful beauty of that sacred spot. Then Carlos rose and went away, and Carlota called to him:

"Brother, aren't you coming back here?"

"No, sister. I've said goodby and now I want to go. I'm getting my things in the schoolroom."

Carlota would have liked to linger, but now joined her brother in the pretty glen beside the spring; and, while he wound his riata and thrust his hammer and knife into his sash, she secured the basket which old Marta had given them with their luncheon. Little of that was now left; only a few scattered cakes, which she carefully gathered again, thinking they would answer very well for supper, in case they did not arrive at "anywhere" by that time. She also slung her botany-box across her shoulders, which made Carlos inquire:

"Why are you taking that? If we do get things we can't bring them home to the garden."

"Well, you're taking your hammer. If you can crack stones I can pick flowers. You know they'll keep a week in my box, and we ought to be home long before that. If—we ever come at all!"

"We must first go before we can come. Where shall it be?"

"I know. I've thought it out."

"Where, then, Carlota? Quick! Oh! how the wind blows!"

"To find our father."

"We don't know where he went."

"He went toward the north. He said he was going there. That was where his business led him. Our business is to follow and find him. He is ours. He belongs. We always do go to him in trouble, and aren't 'enemies' trouble?"

"I don't know. Out here I feel braver, and not a bit afraid of those men. The old one, that jiggled his teeth up and down when he talked—that was the curiousest thing! like he'd borrowed somebody else's—he was real old and wizzly-up. That one—he couldn't hurt a gopher! The Mr. Rupert was so pleasant and—Carlota, I believe we've made a mistake. They mayn't be 'enemies' at all. How could anybody take us away from our father if he wouldn't let us go and there was everybody to fight for us? I believe that old Miguel—"

"Carlos, I—am—going—to—my—father."

That settled it. Whenever small Carlota

made a decision it was final; and uncertainty ended, the spirits of both rose. She now joyously exclaimed:

"How jolly he'll be over us! I'll take my little note-book, so I can put down all about the flowers and things we find. Father always teases me because I can so much easier forget than remember."

"You might better take your grammar, I think!" gibed the boy, but she was not offended.

Gently patting Benoni she called:

"See him, brother! How queer he acts? As if he couldn't bear to go away from us. Never mind, you darling. You aren't going from, but with us, and that's quite different. You didn't think we'd leave you behind, did you, Noni sweet?"

"Silly Carlota! Kissing a horse's nose, But he does act queer, though, and I know why. It's the wind. He hates it, and so do I. It—scares me."

"Now, who's silly? I'm only a girl, but no wind scares me. I love it. Let's mount now and ride, ride, ride! Fast and faster and

fastest! Come. You've all you want and so have I."

Running to opposite sides of the gentle Benoni they clasped hands above his back and "trick fashion" leaped to their places upon it. Their soft blankets were all the saddle they used, and with a gay "Vamos!" they started upon their search.

"How he does go! He acts just wild, doesn't he? And isn't the wind getting terr'-ble cold?" asked Carlota, after they had ridden northward for some distance without pausing.

Carlos glanced over his shoulder. His sister's teeth were chattering as she spoke, and he had to press his own tightly together to keep them still. But the fear which prevented his replying had already risen in her own mind and she added, brokenly:

"Dear, it's a—'norther'! We're caught in it. We—shall die. Refugio—let's try—back—."

She had never been exposed to such a windstorm, but he had once experienced something of it. In terror he now recalled that bad quarter-hour which his father and he had

passed before they gained a shelter. There was now no shelter possible. They had steadily ridden away from every habitation they knew, straight over the plateau toward the "north," whither their father had vanished.

But Carlos's latent manliness now asserted itself. Benoni had become wildly terrified, yet the boy managed to pull from beneath himself the blanket which was flapping like a whip and to order Carlota to put it around her.

"I—can't! I—I—am—so—cold!"

He nearly lost his seat in struggling to do it for her, and then Benoni took matters into his own keeping. Swerving from the trail he had been following, he bolted due eastward, and it seemed as if he scarcely touched the ground with his speeding hoofs, that even his strong body was lifted and borne along by the blast.

Carlos strained his vision to see, through the blinding storm of leaves and snow, that point whither the animal was hurrying with all his strength. But he could discover nothing and cried, in anguish:

"Oh! my little Carlota, sister! If you were only safe at home!" Then as her stiffening arm stole round his neck he added, consoling-

ly: "But don't you worry, darling! I'll take care of my father's little daughter!"

But she was already past speech, almost past suffering; and realizing this even the boy's brave spirit succumbed and he let his head fall on Benoni's neck, wondering if he were also dying.

A few minutes later, the snow had covered them all with its warm blanket and the children lay beneath it, motionless, upon the back of their faithful horse, which feebly struggled on. Besides themselves there was no living thing upon that wide white plain; for even the roaming cattle which dwelt there had vanished somewhere. Death stared the wanderers in the face, but they had already passed beyond consciousness of that.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE END OF SEVEN DAYS

Mr. George Disbrow hated anything which interfered with his personal comfort. Also, he had "nerves" that, first and last, gave himself and his neighbors a deal of trouble. Like a caged creature he was pacing the refectory and, when his son Rupert entered, demanded:

"Any news?"

"No, father."

"Humph! You'll go all to pieces yourself next. Have you had your supper?"

"I—believe so. Yes—yes, indeed. I ate something a little while ago. It's all right."

"I tell you it's all wrong. We never should have come to this beastly hole."

"I certainly wish we hadn't, but—under the circumstances—we are not the ones to complain. To please a crotchety old woman we did come, bringing disaster with us, and whatever treatment we receive we have deserved."

"If these people would organize a systematic search they might be successful."

"They're working on something better than system—upon an almost superstitious love for the dead 'Lady of Refugio' and her lost children, lost—through our fault!"

"Nonsense! Through the fault of that imbecile Cardanza! The fact of such a hot-head-idiot being left in charge proves just what sort of man this Adrain Manuel is, and how unfit to bring up even such stupid children as his."

"Father, please don't. I never saw two more charming little ones, and even you admired them, till they disappeared."

"Which shows that I'm right again. At twelve years, any American who possesses common sense should know better than to be frightened out of his father's house by the fairy tales of a blockhead foreigner."

Mr. Rupert wearily smiled. His father had rung the changes on this sad subject till nothing new remained, and the son knew that a keen self-reproach pointed the venom of the old man's words. He gently rejoined:

"It's been a difficult business for a difficult client from the beginning, and I never would

have persuaded you to try a personal interview with this man Manuel, if I hadn't believed that the trip here would benefit your broken health."

"The fellow has been a fool to so stand in his own light!" testily commented the elder lawyer.

"Once I thought so, too. Now I do not. I believe he is one in a thousand. His life is an ideal one and he made his wife supremely happy. She could have missed but little by what Mrs. Sinclair terms her 'crazy elopement.'"

"You grow enthusiastic."

"Who could help it? Witnessing how love has transformed this old adobe ruin into such a comfortable, even luxurious, home."

Mr. Disbrow snorted in contempt. Then pointed to the single candle burning in its silver stick, saying:

"There's your 'luxury'! Now sit down in that rickety old chair and write to Mrs. Sinclair. It must be done some time."

Thankful for any diversion, Mr. Rupert promptly obeyed, and the letter was barely finished when Miguel stumbled in, so weary and heart-heavy that he seemed older than the an-

cient Gaudalupo. There had been no white hairs on the *major-domo's* black head till within these last few, terrible days, and his once merry eyes were dull and lifeless.

"Miguel, you must rest. You are the head and front of all this search, and you dare not fail," pleaded the young lawyer, earnestly.

"I have failed," hopelessly assented this once fiery fellow.

He no longer resented the presence of these strangers, these "enemies," at Refugio. They had done their worst and by his own stupidity, his misguided zeal, he had aided and abetted the ruin they had wrought. He accused himself of being the lost children's murderer, and was so continually engrossed by such self-reproaches that he was almost crazed. Indeed, he sometimes prayed that he might become wholly so for then he would forget his misery.

"Don't say 'failed,' Miguel. I believe, I do believe, those children will be found, safe and well," cried the other, unable to endure the sight of the manager's anguish.

"So do I. At—the Resurrection."

"Long before that. Upon this earth which they made lovely by their presence. Come.

Take heart again. Pluck up your faith and courage."

"They perished in the storm," stolidly answered Cardanza.

"We don't know that. We have found no proof of it."

"Neither do you know this country. The strongest cattle cannot live through a 'norther,' and my small ones were delicate, like flowers;" pointing outward toward 'My Lady's Garden,' where were rows of limp, dead lilies and drooping heliotropes.

"Yes, I see. But the little Carlota was no thin-blooded herb. Look again. There are many plants left unharmed and wonderfully green and fresh. Even of just such sturdy growth were the Manuel children. At will accustomed to sleeping out of doors, to a cold plunge each morning, to an almost wholly out of door life, sun-browned and of perfect health —why, they are sure to be alive and thriving somewhere. Only—we haven't yet looked in the right place to find them. But we shall. We shall."

Miguel's face lightened somewhat and he said, quite gently:

"Stranger, you mean well, and you are a fine fellow—whatever yon man may be. But folks born fools can't help it," he ended, with a significant glance toward the restless elder gentleman.

"That's all right. Thank you. But, come. Let's have some supper. I heard that wise mother of yours say that 'A full stomach made a light heart.' A light heart should also give a clear head. Let's try her proverb and see what it avails." He held out his hand and Miguel took it listlessly.

"One week, Señor Rupert. One week and two hours, since they rode out of paradise—into death!"

At this, Mr. George Disbrow completely lost his temper and snapped out:

"You're all a parcel of numskulls!"

"Father!"

"Fact. *Prima facie* fact. If there's supper to be had go get it. That old blubbering Marta has never cooked a morsel that ever I heard of, except that much-lamented podrida, which I still believe is a myth. Anita—well, I'll not abuse her. Only for her we should all starve. She's no *cook*. Not by any stretch of imagina-

tion can she be considered one, all pepper and spice—''

''Like herself!'' suggested Mr. Rupert.

''Like nothing fit to set before an eastern palate. Go get your supper. I've been looking over this map that Adrian Manuel made of this region and I find there are some habitations marked to the north of us where other maps show a plain space. Indicates what sort of country it is when every mud-cabin has to be named as if it were a town. I think— Never mind. Go get your supper, if there is any.''

He was promptly left alone and as promptly regretted it. Whatever happened now, he was miserable. The refectory had been, by Marta's advice, given over to the use of and as a ''cage'' for ''that ne'er-be-quiet Señor Disbrow, with the rattling teeth in his ugly mouth.'' During all that memorable week just past, the unhappy gentleman had come in for all of the afflicted Marta's sharpness. Even Anita, who fancied that she had herself run the gamut of the housekeeper's abuse, acknowledged that not until now had she had ''the pleasure of the acquaintance of that most amiable Señora Cardanza, no.''

But now the dame had neither strength nor

SHE STARTLED THE MAID

spirit left to abuse anybody. She ate little and incessantly murmured her prayers, while she slept scarcely at all. Nobody had suspected her of such deep feeling, but she declared to old Gaudalupo, who alone had time to listen that:

"Being thrice a widow might be trouble for some, yes. Yet not for Marta. I tell thee, Gaudalupo Sanchez, sorrow has not come near me until now. It is so. In truth. Soul of my life, Carlota! Where sleepest thou, my angel? To the shearing would she go, no? Till I promised I would not sing to my guitar with her away. For I can sing, yes, in truth. She will come if I sing!" A moment later she startled the maid, who was serving the supper, with her sudden cry. "Anita, Anita!"

"What now, mother Marta? I am busy, I. Here is Señor Disbrow, and yonder is Miguel, of the heavy heart; whom I used to tease but only pity now."

"My guitar, Anita! *Instante!* Maybe she will hear it, our Carlota! Always it would bring her. Always. Quick! the guitar!"

"*Ay de mi!* Woe is me! She has gone even more mad. Well, mad folks must be humored!" murmured the maid.

A few moments later, the two men taking their food in the kitchen were startled by the notes of the antiquated instrument and the curious, quavering song which accompanied it. Miguel, the son, shared Anita's suspicion, and cried:

"It is my mother! Her brain has now turned. Ah! it is hard when the old must die of grief."

"Hark! That isn't grief! That's something more—and different!" returned the girl, listening intently.

For the song had abruptly ceased; been cut in two, as it were, by some sudden interruption.

Mr. Rupert hurried outward as old Marta hobbled inward, and they met on the threshold, where, to the great peril of his eyes, she thrust a thorny agave leaf into his face and, pointing to it, gesticulated wildly. Also, she muttered Spanish so rapidly that even Anita couldn't keep pace with half she said. At every few words she motioned toward the outer court—then back to the leaf again. Evidently, she was frantically imploring Mr. Rupert to examine it; but he now, also, believed her crazed.

It was the ancient Gaudalupo who finally

brought reason out of this confusion. Without troubling to move his head or alter his feeble monotone he reiterated again and again:

"Before ink and paper was the Pueblos wrote on leaves. Before ink and paper was. Before ink and paper—"

"Hush! thou imbecile!" screamed Anita.

"No, he's not an imbecile! No, no! Far from it!" corrected Mr. Rupert, suddenly waving the agave leaf above his head and fairly prancing in his glee. "There is a message written here!"

Whereupon Anita and "that crusty Miguel," as she had used to call him, found it convenient to clasp hands and thus convince themselves and each other that they, at least, were sane. For, surely, this seemed a mad, mad world!

CHAPTER VIII

BOTANIST AND MINERALOGIST

"Brother!"

"O, Carlota! Are you awake at last?"

"Was I asleep? I—I was out in the storm. We aren't riding yet, are we? Why is it so dark? What does it mean?"

"It means that our splendid Benoni has saved our lives. Saved our very lives, Carlota Manuel! A horse! Benoni!"

The little girl struggled to raise herself. She was strangely cramped and numb but there was a warm breath upon her face and, putting out her hand, she touched a velvety nostril.

"Noni! You dear! But how funny! Seems as if we were all lying down together, Carlos."

"Yes. When I waked I was right against his neck," answered the boy, gently stroking her shoulder, which he could only feel, not see.

"Where are we? Is it night?"

"I don't truly know, but I think we're in a cave, or some place under ground. I've been awake a long, long time. I thought you—you were—"

"Were what, brother? Hold me tight. I feel so queer. My head is whirling round and round. What did you think?"

"That, maybe, you were dead. And your head doesn't whirl. How could it. Now don't cry. You mustn't, Carlota. You—must—not!"

"I haven't no intention, so there. Just because I did once. I—besides, I promised not, didn't I?"

"Yes. You're real good, little sister."

"Oh! you dear! That makes me feel better—almost straight-headed again. For it did whirl, Carlos, or it felt so. I wish I did know where we are. Is it always dark in caves, brother? And do folks ever get out of them?"

"Course. It's not very high, and Benoni must be the most smartest horse there is in the whole world," he answered, with an affected courage.

"You didn't say good grammar that time, yourself, Carlos."

"Never mind. I think we're in a cave or covered up canyon that Benoni knew about and had seen sometime when he was roaming. Anyway, it's a place he wouldn't have come into except he was in trouble. A 'norther' is trouble —dreadfullest kind. People and horses die in them, often. We must have gone to sleep on his back and he crept in here with us and laid us all down together. He knew that way we'd keep warm. We did. I'm warm as pepper; aren't you?"

"I'm warm enough, but my clothes are all stiff, like they'd been wet, and I'm terr'ble hungry."

"So am I."

"Let's try to get out and find something to eat. I had a few cakes in my box. Do you s'pose Noni rolled us off, or we rolled ourselves off his back?"

"I don't know. But we didn't die, so we can still go on to find our father—when we get out of here. Let's go now."

"Wait. We've got to give God thanks, first. 'Cause it was He who made Benoni, a horse, have sense to save us alive. Do you hear me, brother?"

He answered rather absently. He was as grateful as she but he had not only heard her —he had, also, heard something else: a dull, creeping sound from somewhere beyond them in this cavern. He hoped she had not noticed this and was glad when she stood up and stretched herself and, at the same time, stumbled against something which sharply rattled.

"Oh! my box! My precious old tin box! For true, for true!" she cried.

Already, they fancied they could see a little through this darkness and moved toward each other till their hands closed together upon the battered botany-box, which Carlota had always carried with her on her rambles a-field. In an instant she had opened it and joyfully exclaimed:

"The cakes! They are still in it! They are —they are!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

For the moment, their terrible hunger made them almost like wild creatures. Almost, but not quite; for just then Benoni put out his nose and touched Carlota's arm.

"Wait, brother. You must. It was Noni

who saved our lives and he's hungry as we. He shall eat before I do!"

"Not before, Carlota! Oh! not before! I —can—not—wait!"

Indeed, the boy's voice had changed. At the mere odor of food his misery overcame him, for he had been awake much longer than his sister had and was, by that time, much nearer starvation. He frightened her, yet with infinite tenderness she drew his head upon her shoulder and with her free hand began to feed him. Bit by bit, morsel by morsel—though, at first, he snapped his teeth so greedily he almost bit her fingers—she put the *bollos* into his mouth, coaxing, the while:

"Eat it slowly, brother. Make it last a long, long time, same as when we have Christmas sweeties. Now, wait a moment, and I'll give one to Benoni."

"Not yet, Carlota! I'm first—another—just another!"

He did not know how few were the cakes she had put into the box when they left the schoolroom and supposed there were plenty for all. She ignored her own hunger and managed to keep back two for Benoni and was even able to

smile over the greater carefulness in receiving them from her hand the animal showed than the boy had done.

"Look, Carlos. Benoni takes his cakes like a gentleman. He has—hasn't bited—bitten—me once. He's nicer mannered than you, I guess; yet, you poor dear, you never had to eat your dinner in a cave before, did you?"

"Another, sister?"

"Oh! dear! It's too bad, but there isn't not another single one. Not even the least bit of a crumb for I've felt all around the inside of the box to see. Never mind, when we get out we'll find something more."

The famished boy smacked his lips and asked:

"Weren't those the very nicest *bollos* Marta ever made?'

"I guess so," answered she with a little gasp; then hurried to add, lest she should betray that she had not tasted one; "Benoni thought so, too. There. He's getting on his feet. Take care, good beastie! Don't you step on Carlota!"

There was little danger of this, for he could see much better than they and he, evidently, felt it time to leave this prison house. He

whinnied, shook himself, cautiously turned around, and began to pick his way past them. Afraid that he would leave them, the little girl begged:

"Don't go without us, Noni! Wait! You mustn't be faster than we. Hurry, brother! I'll take hold of his tail, and you take hold of me, and he'll lead us out that way. Come."

"We mustn't leave our things here. There's the box. Maybe, after all, there is another cake left in it that you didn't find. Besides our blankets and hats, if we didn't lose them."

"You must be quick then. He will go. He is determined. I'll hold him back all I can, but—"

Then again sounded that strange creeping, and even Carlota heard it. So did Benoni. For he made a sudden movement forward, scraping his back as he did so, and began to climb the slope down which he had carried them to safety.

"That's a funny noise! Guess there must be bats in here. Anyway it surely is growing lighter. Ouch! I keep stubbing my toes on sharp pointed stones or heaps of stuff. It looks

as if it were all a white place. Maybe, it's been whitewashed, same as Marta's kitchen."

At that, Carlos made his sister pause. From what he had been taught by his father he guessed what the "whiteness" meant:

"Oh! Carlota, we've stumbled into the beautifullest cave! It is! I believe it! These sharp points are stal-ag-mites. High up must be the other things—stal-ac-tites! Father said he'd take me sometime to a cave almost as wonderful as that Mammoth one in Kentucky, and I do believe we're in it now! Oh! how glad I am the 'norther' sent us to it!"

"I don't understand such big words."

"They're no bigger than the ones you talk about your old flowers."

"My father says that real bo-tan-i-cal names are just the same all over the world. It's best to learn them right in the first place, cause then you don't have to unlearn them afterward."

"It's just the same about stones. I couldn't explain to you, Carlota, since you're only a girl; but knowing about stones helps about mines. If our father wasn't a ge-ol-o-gist and a min-er-al-o-gist, the rich men away off wouldn't hire

him, as they do, to 'prospect' and explore their mountains.'

"Flowers help, too. Course. It's this way, Carlos. Try to understand. Funny! A boy who knows most every rock there is doesn't know a dozen blossoms. Plants 'talk,' my father says, to people who have learned their 'language.' The sort of plants they are shows what's in the soil they live on. All plants cannot live on one soil. I—"

"Pooh! That's a mistake, I guess. What about our mother's garden? Any flower—"

Benoni ended their discussion by going forward again, after his brief rest. As they progressed the light strengthened and they stumbled less; and in the relief of this, Carlos began to sing. But his song was interrupted by a cry which set them trembling in terror.

"Ah, ho! Ah, ha, ho!"

The shout came from behind them, and its echo through that ghostly place was very terrifying.

CHAPTER IX

PABLO, THE DANCER

It was due to its steep slope that Benoni had penetrated so far into the cave. To escape from the 'norther,' he had fled down it, stumbling and forced to go forward, till he reached that level inner chamber where consciousness returned to the children.

Now to reascend that narrow, jagged passage was almost impossible. Yet the same instinct which had guided him to safety remained with him as he crawled, struggled, twisted himself upward. The children clung to him, urged and pushed him, in their frantic efforts to escape whatever was pursuing them; for constantly nearer and louder drew that curious cry from the tunnel-like depths of the cavern. And, at last, when their force was almost spent—they found themselves in the sunshine!

The sudden light blinded them so that they clapped their hands over their eyes to shut it

out and even Benoni dropped his head and blinked at the ground. Then, all at once, that hoarse shout was in their very ears; yet, out there in the open, sounding much feebler and more human.

Carlota opened her eyes and peeped through her fingers—stared—and bounded forward with an answering cry of delight:

"Pablo, the Simple! Only our own Pablo—Pablo!"

The man stared back at her in return, blinking at the light as she had done, till a smile spread over his dull countenance and he began to hop around her in that curious fashion which expressed his keenest pleasure.

Carlos looked up and joined his recognition to hers:

"Pablo, the Dancer! The Simple!"

At a glance the reason of the latter nickname was obvious: the face of this middle-aged man had little intelligence, though there was a certain craftiness in his small black eyes. He wore a blanket and the cast-off clothing of some ranchman, while his head was partially covered by a rimless straw hat. Around the hat was a faded red ribbon on which some rude jester had

painted the legend: "Razzle Dazzle, the Dancer," and the fellow wore it as if it were a royal headdress.

His present "dance" continued until he was tired; then he held out his hand for an alms.

"No, poor Pablo. I have nothing to give you. Our father isn't with us. How came you here?"

He muttered something which Carlos could not understand but Carlota's sympathy interpreted.

"The storm? Yes, I know, we were in it, too. There! Don't shrug your shoulders any more—you make me cold to see you! Yet, you look well. I hope you aren't hungry, Pablo, as we are."

"Ha!" He pulled a crust from his ragged pocket and offered it to her; but it was black from contact with the dirty cloth and, faint though she was, she couldn't touch it. She could only look enviously at Benoni, who had already nibbled a space in the grass. That, at least, was clean. If she could but eat it, too!

"No? Hmm;" said Pablo, shaking his head in satisfaction and returning the crust whence it came.

Then the girl asked:

"Pablo, can't you show us a place where there are berries? Remember the Señor Manuel, Don Adrian? He is your friend."

At the question a new expression stole into the beclouded face and, taking Carlota's small brown hand in his dirty paw, he gently stroked it. All the good which had ever come into his life had come through "Don Adrian" and the dead "Lady of Refugio." He remembered. Such as Pablo do not easily forget. Once—he didn't know when—but he remembered, he had been very ill. The fever had burned in his veins and he had lain upon the mesa while the sun had scorched him to death.

Then, in time, there had come between him and the sun the shadow of a kindly face. The face had bent above him and there had been no shrinking in it. Pablo was used to seeing people shrink away when he drew near. This brooding Señor had not done so. He had put a wet cloth on the hot head—he had put the suffering "Simple" on his own horse—he had himself walked a long way. They had come to Refugio, to a great, white, cool room, where an "Angel" in a white robe had ministered to the

sick one. Pablo had recovered, but—the "Angel" had died.

The poor half-breed knew. He had seen them put her in the ground and plant flowers above her. After that, Señor Manuel had come and sent Pablo away. With money in his grasping hands, with clean clothing upon his deformed body, with all kindness and charity, yet still—away. Else, the "Simple" would have stayed on forever in the cool, white rooms. But the sad-faced Señor could not bear that. The sight of the wretched creature, whose life had cost a life infinitely more precious, was too bitter.

In some dim way the "natural" understood even that. So he went, sorrowfully but obediently; and always thereafter, when he saw the master of Refugio riding across the plateau put himself out of sight. Yet, as the little children grew up, they were told about Pablo and their mother's sacrifice for him and learned to regard him with a sacred interest and friendliness.

After a moment's apparent consideration of her request, the half-breed darted away, disappeared in the ground, as it were—whence he

soon emerged. This time his hands were heaped with food which even dainty Carlota could enjoy; nuts of more than one sort, with the fruit of an edible cactus, such as the children often and eagerly sought.

Now, for a time, nothing was heard but the cracking of nutshells and the munching of sharp teeth; till, wholly refreshed, Carlos remarked:

"Well, I don't know how long we were in that cave, but it must have been all night. While we can, and it is daylight, I think we'd best go on. My little compass says that way, yonder, is north, and I do hope we'll get to some nice place before it's dark again."

"Wait a minute, brother. I've thought of something. Marta and Miguel and everybody may be worried, thinking about us out in a 'norther,' and I'm going to tell them we did not die."

"I'd like to know how? If we go back those men will be there just the same, likely. It was you Carlota Manuel, first said we should go to our father; and, even if you've changed your girl's mind I haven't changed my boy's one."

"I haven't changed the leastest littlest corner

of it, so there. But, listen, Pablo. Will you do something for Don Adrian Manuel? Something to prove you love him?"

"Umm."

When he nodded so emphatically, she caught her brother's knife from the sash where it still remained and ran to a near-by agave plant, and cut one of its broadest leaves. Using its own thorn for a pen she carefully printed on its tough skin the few sentences following:

"The Norther didn't Get Us. God and benoni Took Care of us. we Cannot come Home Yet. Carlos and Carlota Manuel."

Then she placed the leaf in the Indian's hand and looking closely into his eyes, directed:

"Listen to me, Pablo. Listen the very sharpest ever was and with no forgetting. Are you paying strictest 'tention?"

"Umm."

"You must go straight to Refugio. You are to take this leaf to old Marta. You know her, well. She is the old, old woman who gives you bread and meat when you come stealing around and my father is away. You are to give it to her and nobody else. Who are you to give it to, Pablo?"

"Marta. She give Pablo chicken *tamales*. Umm. Good."

Before she could reiterate her instructions he had started. He held the printed leaf in both hands before him and steadfastly studied it. Maybe he had never felt of such importance; and if his vagrant mind could have kept to one idea the precious missive would have soon been in the housekeeper's hands. As it was, trifles attracted this unfortunate postman, and he had wandered hither and thither in pursuit of them, till it was on the evening of that seventh day when he at length delivered it.

Where, at that hour, were the little runaways?

CHAPTER X

A PICTURE IN THE SKY

The searching parties from Refugio and the neighboring ranchos had all gone east, west, or south. To the north lay an unbroken mesa, or plateau, having no shelter within a known distance. Nobody dreamed that the children would follow other than familiar routes, and the first point explored was the "shearing place," belonging to Refugio itself.

This was a cluster of adobe huts upon a little stream. It was four leagues distant from the Mission and, during the shearing, used as a folding for the sheep-bands owned by Mr. Manuel, though at other times these browsed upon the plains or were driven into the mountains. It was to this folding that old Marta had said the lost ones were bound; and in looking for them there the first false start was made and the first valuable hours wasted.

Further than this, had Pablo fulfilled his

we'd get into more trouble. He's such a wise darling!'' exclaimed Carlota.

''There goes another of a girl's imaginings. I wouldn't be a girl for—for anything!''

''I like being a girl, so that's right for both of us. Which way?''

''North, of course. The compass tells. Wasn't that the way we started?''

''Yes. But I thought, maybe, the storm—there's nice mountains over yonder,'' suggested the sister.

''Well, maybe, they're far enough north. We'll go to them. They do look as if they'd be cooler, and in mountains there are always canyons and holes to sleep in. I wouldn't mind sleeping on this mesa if it hadn't been for that 'norther.' If another should come.''

''It won't. They're only in great whiles, you know. Make Benoni go. He's lazy, the dear! He's had too much grass.''

Indeed the handsome creature did need urging. He was loath to turn away from that direction in which his old home lay, and it was with a very different pace from his usual one that he again set forward.

Then cried Carlota, in fear:

"Carlos, he isn't lazy! He's sick. He surely is!"

"Nonsense! He needs encouraging, that's all."

After a trick he had been taught by a horse-trainer, once resident at Refugio, the lad leaned forward and whispered in the animal's ear. The ruse seemed to succeed. Benoni quickened his steps to his usual graceful lope, which jarred his riders no more than the swaying of a cradle. This movement was so natural and familiar that their own spirits rose. To a gay little melody which he had learned from Anita, Carlos began to sing:

"We're going to our father, oh! we're going
to our father,
We're going to our father on this happy,
sunny day!"

Carlota joined him to the best of her ability, though she had often to pause in admiration of his genius, which could work into the rhythm details of home happenings and even the things they passed by the way. He, also, thought his sister's voice the sweetest ever heard; and thus, in their absorbed pride in each other they trav-

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elled far before they realized how intolerably warm it was and how Benoni was again sorely lagging.

"Never mind. We're almost to some little hills. There are trees on them and so there must be water. I guess a drink is what we all want."

"But, brother, we mustn't drink him while he's warm," warned Carlota.

"I shan't drink him warm or cold, silly child! But now we've thought of it, aren't you dreadful thirsty?"

"Terr'ble. If it's there, I'll fill my tin box with the water when we go on again."

"Maybe we won't go any further to-day. I wonder how far we are from Refugio!"

The boy regretted his words as soon as uttered, for his sister turned and looked backward over the sun-beaten plain in such a homesick way it made his heart ache. His head also began to ache and he made Benoni take a right-angle course to that they had been following. The trees were directly in their line of vision now, and Carlota cried:

"Oh! they're only a little bit off now!"

He was wiser in plain-lore and answered:

"They may be ten miles. The air's so clear one can't tell."

"Oh, brother! Why, they look as if I could almost touch them!"

"I know that, dear! If it weren't so—awful —hot!"

Suddenly Benoni stopped, as if he had come to the end of his strength. Surprised and frightened, the children leaped down and examined the jaded beast, while Carlota sobbed:

"We shouldn't ought to have made him 'carry double' in this heat. We're so terr'ble big now-a-days, Carlos."

"Yes. I'm afraid we've been pretty selfish. After he saved us, too!" admitted the lad.

"His head's the hot place. Wait. I know what Miguel does sometimes, when he's afraid Amador has overheated himself."

With that she began to break and bruise the leaves of an herb growing near, saying:

"I don't know if they're the right sort, but they will be wet and cool. If his head aches, like ours, they may ease it."

"How will you keep them on? Miguel takes a big handkerchief or a strap."

"Why your sash is just the thing. You can put your hammer and knife in my box till we get the water. There. I'll do it. I'm a girl. I know how to make it stick."

But she had to remount in order to reach the animal's head and when she had finished she thought that Benoni looked very funny, indeed. She laughed:

"He makes me think of an old woman in a cap!"

"He looks sort ashamed of himself, doesn't he?"

Yet, after a few moments, it was evident that the beast felt refreshed by the cool application and Carlos exclaimed:

"Good! If it's helping him it will be nice for us, too."

"Then I'll bruise a lot and we can put them in our hats and walk to the hills. I shall not ride poor Noni another step till he gets well."

This simple craft, of the crushed leaves, was of infinite value to the straying children, who sturdily pressed forward toward the mountains—though these seemed to retreat rather than draw nearer. After they had been walking for a long time, till they were almost ex-

hausted, Carlota stopped and clapped her hand to her eyes, exclaiming:

"Oh! I see things! Houses, and trees, and queer, rushing wagons! Water, too! Water, water! But they're all upside down—they are all coming out of the sky—head first!"

Carlos had seen such strange "pictures in the sky" when he had been a-field with his father and understood what she meant.

"A mirage—that's what it is, just a mirage. Which way? Maybe I can see it, too."

She pointed out the curious thing and the lad studied it attentively, then explained:

"I know what those queer wagons are. See? They are leaving the houses—they are going—going—away. They are like the pictures in the books, when you hold the page wrong side up. They are—railway—cars—and—an—engine!"

"Will they come here and hurt us? Like those other pictures of the accident in the newspaper?"

"Pooh! No. They are a long way off, and cars can run nowhere except on a track made for them. A track, try to understand, Carlota! is a pair of iron or steel rails laid on the

ground. The car and engine wheels are fixed on these rails and so they move."

Carlota wrinkled her brows, then said:

"The way you tell it isn't very—very understand-able. But how long is the pair of rails, brother?"

"Hundreds and thousands and, maybe, millions of miles. All around the whole world, I guess."

She could not believe this statement. At first, she thought he was merely teasing her by its boastfulness, then feared that the heat had turned his brain. Maybe her own had been touched by the sun, too. Maybe there wasn't any picture in the sky. And oh! how thirsty she was! She turned toward Benoni, and cried:

"Why, brother! See how rested Noni looks!"

"Yes. But—you don't act as if you felt very well yourself. Are you sick, too?"

"I guess not. Only, do you s'pose we might ride just a little way, now, Carlos?"

"We must. I'll help you on him."

"Not 'less you do, too."

Another moment, and they were both back in

their old places on the horse's back and he appeared to have acquired a new strength. He lifted his grotesquely bandaged head, whinnied, worked his nostrils, and started forward at a swift pace. Then, clinging to him and to each other, they dropped their heads and went to sleep; and it was Benoni's stopping which made them again open their eyes.

"Oh! Water! Oh! Water—rocks—trees—berries—berries—berries! How good, how good!" fairly shouted Carlos.

At last they had reached the hills! and, at once, all three of the weary pilgrims had their mouths in the little stream which ran among the rocks and were drinking deeply of the saving water.

CHAPTER XI

FRIENDS IN NEED

Thus refreshed, they all—even Benoni—dropped upon the grass which bordered the stream and again fell asleep; and it was the horse which first awoke. The neighing of one of his own race aroused him and he made an effort to rise; but, with a pathetic appeal in his great eyes, sank back upon his side. Another moment and the neighing, accompanied by human voices, was close at hand. A mustang's head was pushed through a break in the scrub and a shout followed the head:

"Here we are! Yo-ah-ho! Water! Water!" Then the shout was checked by the exclamation: "What in the name of—redskins! Indians—Wh-e-aw!"

By then, Carlos had sprung up and, in the daze of first awakening, was staring at the intruder. He did not know that it was his own peculiar attire that had suggested "Indians,"

and he had never as yet seen a hostile red man. But the tone frightened him. He seized Carlota and forced her to her feet, while beside them lay poor Benoni, unable to arise. Thus, for a time, the twins stood, motionless, clasping each other, with their terrified expression slowly changing to delight as they gazed at the several men in uniform who now approached them. All were horsemen and some were leading instead of riding their thirsty beasts.

"Soldiers!" whispered Carlos to his sister, and she smiled.

Often she had heard her father talk of the "brave soldier boys" who kept those wide plains safe from the unknown tribes of savages; and her smile revealed to the foremost cavalryman that he had not now to deal with the child of a detested race.

"Hello, there! Where in the world did you come from, papooses?"

The question was asked with a smile so kind that Carlos laughed as he answered:

"We aren't papooses. We're regular white Americans."

"Well, you don't look it, with that brown face! Where do you come from?"

"We came from home, Señor," answered Carlota, because her brother was now absorbed in watching the other cavalrymen and heedless of the question.

"So ho! Well, where is 'home'?"

"Refugio."

"Hello! Hel-lo! That so? I've heard of that rancho. It's a long way from here. Where are the others of your party?" still queried the officer.

"There isn't any others."

"What's that? No others? Only you two kids?"

"Beg pardon, Señor Soldier, but we're not kids. We're children, just regular American children. We only wear kid-skin clothes, *charros;* [1] that's all. Because our father says it is the very comfortablest and best dress there is for children who live as we do. We're almost always out of doors, you see, and in these things we are ready for any fun that's going."

"I should think so, indeed, or for any business, either. Your father is a sensible man, that's as plain as a pipe-stem. I've heard about him. Where is he?"

[1] Garments.

"Oh! have you, Señor Soldier? But that's what we don't know, what we're trying to find out."

The gray haired officer sat down and drew the little girl to his knee. The action was so gentle and fatherly that it banished her slight self-control and flinging her arms about his neck she sobbed:

"Oh! you dear sir! Won't you help us find him? We thought it would be easy, but he is so far, so very far away!"

"There, there, little lass! I'll do my best, surely. I'm a soldier, you know. It's my business to help little maids when they need help."

Carlota instantly stopped crying and kissed the grizzled Captain upon his stiff moustache, saying:

"I knew it! The very minute I looked into your eyes I knew that you liked little children. We're not so very little, you know, but I guess we're little enough to be liked."

"I reckon so! But what was there in my eyes that told you that about me?"

"A twinkle. Folks who don't love little children never twinkle their eyes."

"Well, well, you observant small woman.

Yet you guessed right. I've a little miss of my own, away back in the east, getting educated to come out and help her old daddy, by and by. I shouldn't like to have that young daughter right here now, in this particular spot, if she didn't have any 'others' with her. Begin at the beginning, tell me your whole story, and make it short."

The Captain motioned for Carlos, also, to join them, but the lad remained standing and watchful. He was not as sure as his sister that these strangers were friends, for what Miguel had said about the Disbrows had altered his faith in life. He feared that it might be a soldier's duty to arrest runaway people and he preferred to be on his guard.

In the simplest, clearest manner possible the girl told their brief history, and when she had finished, the cavalrymen grouped about the little spring had gained a very vivid picture of the far-famed Refugio rancho. Then said the Captain:

"Thank you, my dear. That was excellently told; but, if I had a chance, I'd send you straight back to your deserted home—or the

nearest guard house! I'm afraid you've done a mighty foolish thing."

She looked so puzzled that he continued:

"Those gentlemen were not your 'enemies,' but your friends. They came to offer you a kindness, and there's one thing I'm going to teach you in this other outdoor schoolroom, a lesson of military discipline, and that is: The first duty in life is obedience. I put it with a capital O. Say it after me, so you'll never forget it: 'The first duty of a soldier is Obedience.' That lesson fits little girls even better than it does my lads, here."

She repeated the time honored maxim, but added:

"I'll remember; yet I don't see how I've disobedienced any."

"Wasn't it you who proposed this runaway escapade?"

"It was I who decisioned about going to our father. We are going, too," proudly.

"Of course, you little Eve! Still dabbling in that same old apple business, hey?"

Everybody except Carlota laughed, and a brother soldier asked:

"Say, Captain, isn't that rather deep for a New Mexican baby?"

"Probably, Lieutenant, though the principle's the same. If *she* hadn't proposed this wild-goose-search, her brother wouldn't have thought of it. But she did; here they are; country full of Apaches; now—what can we do with them?"

Carlos hotly interposed:

"You needn't do anything. We're not afraid. We know lots and lots of Indians. None of them would hurt us. If Benoni is rested we will go on, right away."

"Good enough, lad! There's the making of a soldier in you, and I hope you'll go to the old Point some day. As I remarked, if I hadn't far more serious business on hand I'd send you back to Refugio, under a military escort. As it is—Little girl, are you hungry?"

Two or three of the men had begun to eat their rations at a short distance from their superior officer, and he saw the child watching them. This reminded him that he would, himself, be the better for food.

"Oh! I'm all right, thank you. We had something to eat—once."

"Is that so? I did, too, but I'm ready to eat again."

He gave a wordless command and the soldiers prepared a little woodland feast which the young Manuels never forgot. It was army fare, rather stale and hard, but it was as "manna in the wilderness" to the famished children. Watching them, the cavalrymen prolonged their own meal and, in another sense, also shortened it; for the twins ate as if the supply were inexhaustible and, as the Sergeant observed:

"No tellin' where you'll be when you're hungry next time!"

"Time's up!" called the Captain, and sprang to his feet.

CHAPTER XII

THE END OF A NOBLE LIFE

Carlos and Carlota also rose. They did not know what these new friends, who had met and fed them, would do, but they felt that they were not yet to part company. The Captain settled it:

"Youngsters, I'm on the 'war path,' and I've tarried too long already. Since to leave you alone would be worse for you, you'll have to take the chance of trouble and go with us."

He was vexed and stern. He hated the charge of two children upon his hazardous chase after the troublesome Apaches, whom he was determined to punish if he could meet them.

"If it comes to a fight between the redskins and us, 'the boys around the monkey's cage had better get away,' " remarked a subaltern to his neighbor.

The Captain overheard and grimly smiled.

"Master Facetious may desire to 'get out of the way' himself." Then to the children: "Do you both ride one horse?"

"Yes, Señor Gray Moustache, our Benoni. But he acts terr'ble queer."

"Sergeant, see what's up with the beast."

Saluting, the man replied:

"Captain, I reckon it's all 'up' with him."

"What? You don't mean it! That adds to the charm of the situation. Not a led horse in the squad. Not even a mule."

The perplexed officer hurried where Benoni lay upon his side, piteously gazing upon his young mistress. In his eyes was a sure intelligence. He knew perfectly that the march was to be resumed—and not by him. In that cavern down which he had slipped and stumbled during that dreadful "norther," and out of which he had struggled by an almost impossible effort, he had received some mortal hurt. He could not tell them his agony. He could not cry out, as a human would, but he could and must beseech them—not to leave him!

As yet, Carlota did not understand. She saw

that her beloved horse was loath to rise and she bent over him with a jesting reproof which strangely moved her hearers.

"Come, Noni! You darling, old, lazy fellow! Come. We're going now."

More than one soldier smiled at her trustfulness in themselves, yet sighed to think she was there. She was a brave little thing, yet bravery counts for nought with a maddened redskin. They had found traces of the Apaches and knew they had struck the right trail. A conflict was inevitable. But Carlota only knew of her horse's distress, as she cried:

"Benoni, dear! Darling Benoni! What is the matter? Can't you, won't you, get up? I'll walk all the way. So will Carlos. But we can't leave you here. You'll have to come, too. You'll feel better, by and by. With all these nice, nice horses to keep you company. Not alone any longer, Benoni. Lots of horses, Noni."

The listening officers exchanged glances. They could not further delay. On account of these children they had already lost valuable time, and to waste more, because of a pet horse,

would be impossible. So the Captain laid his hand on Carlota's shoulder, saying:

"My little girl, we must go now. Your pretty beast will have to stay. Bravely say good-by to him and come."

"Good-by? To Benoni Manuel? Alone in the woods? Why, you must be—you must have forgotten that Benoni saved our lives!"

"And so lost his own, my dear."

"But he hasn't lost it. He's alive."

"Scarcely. Very soon he will have passed away."

Carlota's heart felt very queer. She turned faint. When she loved anything—and she loved most things—it was with all her soul. Hitherto, death had meant nothing to her; but now, looking into the sober face of her new friend and the appealing eyes of her pet, the sadness and finality of it struck her like a blow.

She went down upon the ground and tried to lift Benoni's head upon her knee, but she could not, it was too heavy. Yet she could and did throw her arm over his neck and press her wet cheek to his delicate nostrils.

"Benoni! Benoni! The 'Good'! You mustn't

die—I can't bear it! I cannot. Carlos, come! Maybe he'll hear you if he doesn't me. Come, come quick! He never disobeyed us, never. He won't now. But say it sharp, brother. I can't. Tell him to get up. That we'll take him home. We will. We'll let the other go. Straight home—if only—"

Carlos knelt beside her. Both had now become oblivious of the soldiers' presence. Their first great sorrow had them in its grip. Though their mother had died they had been too young to know her loss. Their father had left them, for a time, but he would return. Yet this relentless thing which was stealing Benoni—how could they bear it?

Silence closed about the central group. A horse is more to a cavalryman than to others, and the Captain stood with bent head, eager to be away, yet loath to disturb the sacredness of that moment. The young subaltern, whom his superior had dubbed "Facetious," felt a strange pain in his throat. Till then the raid had been a "lark," a something to break the monotony of camp life. Full of enthusiasm concerning his first skirmish with the redskins, the possible outcome of the affair had not en-

tered his mind. Suddenly, he seemed to see his mother's face. As that noble Benoni was dying in the wilderness so might he die—that very day.

All at once Benoni groaned and desperately tried to lift his head. His eyes brightened, his ears bent forward, his whole attitude was that of intent listening. He was frontier born and bred. He had been in a deadly conflict between white men and savages, and he had not forgotten. Horses never forget that which has terrified them in their youth. Something too faint for ears not sharpened by agony was on the air. Would those whom he loved hear it in time?

"Noni! You precious! You are trying to tell us something! What is it, my pretty beastie? Oh! you brave, beautiful fellow! I cannot remember when you weren't always with us. You must not, must not die now!"

Poor Noni! It was useless. They would not be warned. He could serve them no further. His dumb, silent life had been one long example of duty faithfully performed. His virtues had been many, his faults few. He had been well loved and he had loved much. He had done

what he could and he would sleep now. His glazing eyes fixed on the face of his little mistress, but she could not see his parting gaze because of the tears which filled her own.

Just then, while the deeply moved old Captain stooped to raise Carlota to her feet, the sanctity of the forest death-chamber was invaded.

"Sw-w-ish!"

Something whizzed swift and sharp between soldier and child, grazing his shoulder and her blond curls, and buried itself in the herbage a dozen feet away.

It was the arrow of an Apache!

CHAPTER XIII

BY THE CAPTAIN'S ORDERS

Toward sunset of that same day the little squad of cavalry was slowly crossing the plain. It would not reach camp that night and was watchful, though not expectant, of assault.

"I reckon the redskins had all they wanted for this particular time!" exclaimed the lad who had longed for battle, till he had seen Benoni die, and afterward had dreaded it. However, the whizzing arrow had as promptly banished the dread, for it had barely escaped the breast of little Carlota. From then he had fought like the born hero he was, and his Captain was now regarding him with a grave smile of approval.

"Yes, but not for long. There was sin in their eyes. We shall have work and plenty of it." And, after a moment, the officer spoke to the girl who rode before him on his horse:

"I've a word or two to say to you, Carlota. I'd better say them now, before—"

"Oh! Señor Captain! will they come again?" she cried, in terror. "Where can we go? It is so dreadful!"

"I go wherever my duty calls. What to do with you is the question. At present, I can neither take nor send you to the fort. It's too far. A little way to the north of us is the railroad. One of its stations should be in our direct line of march, and if we reach it, if all goes well, I will leave you children there."

"Shall we see any more Apaches?"

"Humph! You're not so fond of Indians as you were, eh?"

"I never saw that kind before. Many, many have been to Refugio, but they've always been good."

"We soldiers believe that the good Indians are all dead."

"Already, Señor Captain Gray Moustache?"

"Well, there hasn't been a cataclysm to swallow them, as I know. There, don't stare; but if ever you come in the neighborhood of a dictionary look that long word out. 'Gray Mous-

tache' will bother you no more with a humor you don't understand."

"I understand—some, dear Señor. And I didn't mean that name for harm. I always do name people something like them till I know their regular one."

"Indeed? Wish to be properly introduced, do you? Well, my name is Sherman. But I like my nickname and, please, don't look so like a scared kitten. It's never so bad but it might be worse. The old Padres named that spot we've left behind us the 'Spring of Happiness' in the 'Mountains of Flowers.' We found it so, too."

"Why—where—Benoni died?" she asked, reproachfully.

"Exactly. Where we didn't die. Where several of the tricky skunks who would have killed us in ambush were not permitted. The greatest regret I have is that, though he is past feeling wounded pride, we were obliged to leave your noble horse in such vile company. There were a half-dozen dead Apaches in the glen when we left it, and a half-dozen white men so much the safer."

When they had again proceeded in silence for some distance, Carlota asked:

"Don't Apaches go to railroad stations? and do they keep children at them?"

"Under the circumstances, yes, to the last question; and to the first—there's little danger. There are too many trains passing. If only, you midget, you were safely at home!"

"I will be, some day, after we find our father."

"After all your experience, haven't you dropped that crazy notion yet? You are a child of ordinary common sense, I hope, Carlota."

"Yes. That's why I don't see what else there is to do but to go on."

"If a person does wrong I never heard that it was wise to keep on doing it!" said the worried Captain, testily.

"Have I done that?" asked the child, really astonished.

"I call it wrong to make trouble and anxiety for a great number of people, as your running away from home must have done. Even for me, of whom you never heard before."

Carlota wriggled herself aside.

"I will get right down, Señor Captain."

"You'll do nothing of the kind. Remember what I've said, and I'll scold no more. I will leave you two at the station. I will have telegrams sent east and have an advertisement put in the leading newspapers of the country. If the news comes to your father, as it probably will, and certainly should, your troubles will be over. He'll attend to the rest. This is what I mean by your causing me trouble. I shall do all this, not because you had any right to put it upon me, but simply for humanity's sake. Now, next time you are tempted to act foolishly, stop and think if you're going to worry anybody else with your silliness. That's all."

It was the sure end of the severest lecture Carlota had ever received, and the worst of it was that she felt she deserved it. She could only say that she was truly sorry and resolve to "do a lot of thinking next time before she did any acting." Then she added, as a bitter memory was stirred:

"I begin to understand that if we hadn't run away from Refugio our Benoni wouldn't have died."

"Not so fast, little girl, toward that conclu-

sion. The issues of life and death belong to God. We have no concern with them. Our business is to do right, as nearly as we can, and —now let's try a canter!"

At that moment a trooper rode up and saluted.

The Captain gave permission to speak and with a surprised attention, listened to the other's few words. Carlota tried not to hear that which was not intended for her and was sadly startled when her "Gray Moustache" gave her a hasty kiss on the tip of her nose and said:

"That's for good-by, my child. I learn that to take you to the station myself would carry me far out of my way, for my first duty now is at camp. I will write some directions on a leaf from my notebook and enclose some money with it. You must give it to the station master, the telegraph operator, and he will attend to the matter. Good-by, and a prompt reunion with your father!"

To lose this soldier, whom she had regarded as her own especial friend, seemed a terrible misfortune, and her eyes filled as she felt herself set upon the ground, while, with his squad about him, the Captain loped away. Then she

saw that Carlos was beside her and, also, that two troopers had been assigned to their escort. However, the faces of these men had neither the sternness nor the quizzical pleasantry of their commander's. They were the faces of those detailed to perform a troublesome duty while their own desires were elsewhere.

"Bouton, you take the girl and I will the boy."

"All right."

One horseman caught up Carlos and one Carlota, and, without another word, rode off like mad across the plain. They handled the twins very much as they would have handled bags of meal, and they took a direction at right angles from that followed by their commanding officer.

Carlos's temper flamed and he opened his lips to remonstrate against such contemptuous treatment, but remembered the Apaches just in time to restrain his hot speech. It wouldn't do to anger his guardians then and there, and he did not know that they would not have disobeyed the Captain's orders to vent their own spite. Thus they traveled for what seemed hours. Then they came, all in the starlight, to a strange place where were two shining

things laid flat along the ground and the light of a lamp showed through the window of a solitary shanty.

The cavalryman who carried Carlota dismounted and struck his saber against the cabin door. After a brief delay this was opened by a rough looking man, who held a candle above his head and was speechless from astonishment.

The troopers saluted and said:

"By Captain Sherman's orders, these children are to be left here until further notice."

The twins were promptly deposited upon the ground, where they clasped hands and tried to realize this new thing that had befallen them. Before they could do so, their military escort had again saluted and disappeared in the distance, leaving them to make the best they could of their forlorn situation.

CHAPTER XIV

A FIRST RIDE ON THE RAILWAY

"Come in by!" at last said the man in the doorway.

The children silently accepted the invitation and entered a bare little room, to be instantly startled by a yell of dismay from their new host:

"Injuns! Injuns! Apaches! The Saints!"

"We are not Indians!" retorted Carlos, indignantly.

"Och! is it so?" gasped the man, much relieved. "But it's wearin' their clo'es ye are. Did they catch ye and rig yez like that? And did thim soldiers catch ye back out of 'em?"

Despite his roughness, the man had a simple and timid speech, and the boy replied by a brief account of their adventures, ending with the question:

"What are you going to do with us now?"

"As sure as me name's Dennis Fogerty, that thing I don't know."

"Do you live here?"

"Live, is it? Faith, nobody lives nowhere in this haythenish land."

As no reply followed this assertion, Dennis strengthened it by adding:

"It's livin' I've not done since I left Connemara, an' that's the truth I'm tellin' ye. This station of 'Leopard' has give up. The folks what run it has moved on a peg, to the station beyant. 'Tis with them I stays when I stays anywhere. But it's mostly workin' the track all alone I am, barrin' Mike Grady and a hansel o' 'Greasers', to help. It's lonesome as sin, so it is. Moreover—"

Of his own accord, there seemed no prospect of Dennis's pausing, so Carlota interrupted:

"The Captain said we were to wait at the station till we were called for by our father. Is this all the place there is?"

"Stay here, is it? All by your lone?"

"I—don't—know. Is it the railroad? Are those shiny things outside the rails? Do the trains come to-night?"

"Sure, yourself is a girrul, now ain't ye?

"THE CAPTAIN SAID WE WERE TO WAIT"

By the questions ye put all to once. Let's take 'em in turn an' find out."

The face of the lonely track-walker now shone with delight at his company and, as soon as he had heard Carlota speak, he recognized that she belonged to a higher social class than his own. He pulled his forelock when he addressed her and his manner was both respectful and protecting.

"Is it the railroad? 'Tis that same. Are the rails the rails? They be. Do the trains come to-night? Why not? Same's every other. But it's not for a train I do be waitin'. As I was a-sayin', the folks that lives here doesn't. They've moved down to the next station on 'Tuttle,' more by token there's more good wather for fillin' the ingines an' drinkin', whilst here the bottom's dropped out. Was a well sunk, one o' thim artaysians, same's all down the track, yet somethin' or 'nother pumps it out down below, as fast as it fills an' faster. So, says the Superintendent, says he, to Misther Burnham, says he: 'Take the traps of your misthress an' childer' an' go there,' says he. So they went, a week maybe; an' 'twas I just stepped back here, the night, to look for me

shovel that's lost. I'm abidin' a hand-car will be along, by and by; an' I'm thinkin' how Mike 'll be starin' at a couple o' Injuns, for passengers on it."

"But we must stay here, right here. The Captain talked a deal about 'Obedience,' and his orders were: 'Stay.' So we must," said Carlota, firmly.

"But, sister, there is nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep!" protested Carlos, who had not himself been "lectured."

"There is the floor. And we can find something to eat—to-morrow. We need only just sleep, till then."

"An' it's not here ye'll try it!" returned Dennis, indignantly. "What's a Captain more nor a man?"

"He's a soldier. A gentleman. He knows."

"He knows nought. He isn't the 'Super', is he? He hasn't the charge o' the railroad same as of soldiers an' Injuns."

The discussion was closed by a rumbling sound, which grew steadily louder, and made Carlota clasp her brother's hand. He, also, looked toward Dennis with a new fear, almost

as great as her own, till he saw the trackman's face beaming with satisfaction.

"There she comes, alanna! An' I'm mindin' the face o' Mike, me friend, when I trots the pair of ye out an' he sees ye, first off. Here's me shovel—that's right; an' me pick, that I'll maybe need an' maybe no. Ye see, it's up an' down the road I goes an' it's botherin' to know where's handiest to be leavin' me tools. How-iver—step out lively now, whilst I shuts to the door."

"Who is 'she'? And I must not go, nor must Carlos!" declared Carlota, with decision.

"Sharrucks! Out with ye, ye purty, silly girleen! Stay here, is it, alone? To be scalped by the murderin' Injuns? An' is Dennis me name? Out with ye. Be a duck of a colleen an' bother no more. It's the car, I tell yez, an' she's all but come to the door. I'm thinkin' it may be the worse for us all if we hinder her, for 'tis a single track an' big Number Nine's about due. If we're to meet up with a bed this blessed night, it's be ready we must when Mike slows her up."

Carlota shrieked and darted back toward the

shanty, for at that moment there came into sight a low, rapidly moving thing which seemed to threaten them with instant destruction. But Dennis slipped his strong arm around her, saying:

"Sure, little misthress, 'tis nought but a hand-car will take us to supper an' bed. Fear nought, fear nought."

"Is it far to this 'Tuttle' place?" asked Carlos, now more excited than alarmed.

"A matter of a dozen mile, belike. Hi! Here she be! Hello, Mike!"

"Hello, Dennis! Who's them?"

"Injuns! Didn't ye hear them Apaches was makin' fresh trouble the now?"

"Quit foolin', man! If 'twas redskins ye'd got, 'tisn't Dennis Fogarty 'd stand there, grinnin' that gait. On with ye and your company, wherever they come from. I'm long behind an' Number Nine overdue," returned the other, not easily duped.

Then Carlota was swung to the little platform car, her brother beside her, and the men were working the handles which propelled it over the rails. For a moment or two, the children felt

as if they were being hurled to ruin; then the sensation of flying exhilarated them, and they cautiously looked about them.

"Isn't—it—wonderful! Will it—run off—the rails?" whispered Carlota.

But nobody heard her; though a little later Carlos put down his head and halloed in her ear:

"I should like to ride like this—forever!"

She did not answer, save by an ecstatic squeeze of his hand. Then all at once, she caught sight of a dark object lying on the ground, which they whizzed past and left behind. After another short distance, a similar, uncanny, motionless body; and her heart sank drearily. These were the carcasses of dead cattle which had been too ignorant to get out of the way, had been slain by passing trains. In fresh terror she hid her face on her brother's breast and waited for her own direful end. Then on and on, till it seemed she could not endure the agony of suspense, and thought:

"I'd rather be killed quick—quick—than wait —this way!"

But, at last, with a little jerk the car came to

a standstill and Dennis cheerily called out:

"Misthress Burnham! Hello, Jack! Go tell your mother, lad, to come see the fine present I'm after bringin' her. A pair of young papooses, to be raised along with yez all!"

CHAPTER XV

GETTING ACQUAINTED

As the trackmen and their charges stepped into the little circle of light made by one kerosene lamp nobody spoke. The Indian-like attire of the young Manuels deceived the Burnham household, till the mother's gaze rested upon Carlota's face. Then she comprehended that here was a child of white parentage, nor of a class common to the plains, and exclaimed:

"You poor little creature! Come in, come in!"

As the little girl looked up she, also, realized that here was somebody different from old Marta and the lively Anita. The woman's face was thin and worn but showed refinement, as did the modulations of her quiet voice.

"She speaks like our father," thought the wanderer and, impulsively, flung her arms about the stranger's neck.

The embrace was cordially returned.

"My child, you have found friends. Wherever you come from you are safe with us. Come into the house, all of you. Come."

"That settles it!" commented a boyish voice, and somebody laughed. "What Ma says, goes. But where in the name of—"

"Jack, my son!"

"Yes, ma'am," with a mock humility.

"Take care of your tongue."

"Ma, that's too big a contract, without your help. But, who are you, anyway?" he demanded, turning to Carlos, who had become adept in telling his story; and who had now scarcely finished it when there came a rumble and jar which startled the Manuels, and sent all the listeners to their feet.

"The express!"

Another moment and all had hurried to the outside platform, to watch the incoming train, Carlota and her brother with the rest. These two were greatly excited and, as before, the girl was terrified. Perceiving this, Mrs. Burnham drew the child to herself, saying:

"Don't tremble so, my dear. It cannot hurt you, and, if you had lived long in this desolate region you would welcome every train that ar-

rives as a blessed link between you and civilization.''

So Carlota tried to conquer her fear and stand quiet, while the great ''Overland'' with its dazzling headlight rolled up to that tiny station on the plain. Yet, even when it stopped and the passengers began to step out of the curious carriages, that they might stretch their stiffened limbs in a momentary walk, she shivered before the monstrous thing as before a Juggernaut which must crush her if she moved.

Then she heard greetings exchanged between those who had arrived and the station-master's family. The boy, Jack, was hail-fellow-well-met with strange men in blue-jean suits, much begrimed by soot and oil. He even caught a flaming light from the hand of one and went bobbing about beside the cars, looking at the wheels and tapping them with a little hammer, as if he were in charge of the whole affair.

The trainmen jested with him, asking: ''Is she all right, lad?'' ''When are you going to join the crew, Jack?'' and so on. Dennis was here, there, and everywhere; and Carlota was sure that, at all times, he was rehearsing her own story till, presently, she found herself sur-

rounded by staring strangers in a most unpleasant way.

Tuttle was a water-station and the trains delayed there longer than at most other points. Over in front, where the engine puffed and breathed like a living monster, some men had dropped a big, canvas pipe from a huge, high tank, over whose sides the water was splashing wastefully. The little girl's thoughts flew to her mother's garden and the care with which each drop was there hoarded and expended. Then she heard, as in a dream, all the staring people talking, as if she were deaf and could not be offended.

"Apaches." "Fight in the mountains." "Escaped with their bare lives!" "Wonder if we'll be attacked!" "Left here by the cavalry. Will be shipped east to their friends." "Captives all their lives." "Father an Indian chief."

Her head was dizzy. She could but dimly feel that these remarks concerned her brother and herself; that they were as untrue as possible; and that she had no strength left to correct them. Then she saw another woman's face bending close to her own. One of the many

faces which had come down from the car, as the water was coming down from the tank yonder. Like the water, the faces were wasting themselves in vain. She wished they could be stopped. Especially, she wished this last woman would go away. She was old and she spoke in a shrill, cracked voice.

"Indian captives, are they? How interesting! I've crossed the continent a dozen times before, yet these are the first amusing Indian relics I've ever seen. Apaches, eh? Decidedly thrilling. I wish—"

"A-l-l A-b-oar-d!"

Slowly, the great pipe swung back to its own place on the tank. The blue-jean figures, with their flaring torches, climbed into the already moving train. The curious passengers hurried to their "sections," to dream of hold-ups and an Indian outbreak. Once more the heavy, jarring rumble filled the whole earth; then gradually—swiftly—completely passed away. Upon that platform in the wilderness there was once more left but a handful of people to face the night alone.

Carlota's tired, excited brain was full of visions; and Carlos clasped his hands in a momen-

tary despair for that far off House of Refuge, whose safety he had so unwisely left. Alas! the world was not that always, brilliant, sunshiny place he once had fancied it, and a sob rose in his throat.

"Come on! my White-Around-the-Gills-Young-Brave!" cried Jack, bringing his hand down with a ringing slap on Carlos' shoulder.

"Take care!"

"That's what I'm doing. It's getting near midnight and I expect you'll have to share my lofty chamber. So, march, propel, come along, *vamos!* For an Indian, you're the slowest—"

The word died in its utterance. A blow, as well directed as it was unexpected, settled upon Jack's wide mouth with a force that sent him staggering backward.

Carlota instantly rallied from her half-swoon of fatigue, and screamed:

"Carlos! Carlos! My brother! Boy—boy—go away!"

She would have rushed between the combatants had not Mrs. Burnham, though herself vastly astonished, restrained her; while Dennis flung himself into the business, hot foot.

"Go it, gossoons! Faith, the little one's the

better one! Och! Jack—that's a silly blow! The little one! THE LITTLE ONE!"

So crying, he hopped and pranced about the little platform, in high glee, and, presently, found it too small to accommodate his rising spirits.

"Here's to ye, Mike, me friend! Sure it's the nate night for wrastlin'. So it is, so 'tis. Now, isn't that the purty sight? Eh? an' ye would, would ye? Come on then! I'm for ye!"

When Mr. Burnham emerged from the tiny office, wherein he arranged his business concerning the passing trains, he found the lads in a fierce scuffle at the very threshold while, on the ground outside, rolled Dennis and Mike in a frenzy of contest, yet that was, moreover, a perfectly friendly and familiar one.

In the "ould counthry," both trackmen had been famous wrestlers and had won prizes at their parish festivals. Therefore, in this new land, they lost no chance to keep themselves in practice, and now stood up to shake hands with the best of good nature.

"Faith! That was a fine one, Mickey, me boy. Thanks to ye!" cried Dennis, the victor.

"The same to yourself, Mr. Fogarty. If there's one thing out of Ireland I likes more nor another, 'tis a good wrastle with a neighbor, betimes."

"Yes, I know, I know. Clears a man's head betther nor a Sunday o' sleep. Let's turn in now, Mr. Grady, an' leave the misthress in peace."

So, with their arms about each other's shoulders, in a fashion beautiful to see, the late belligerents departed toward a small outbuilding where they slept and, in an incredibly short time, were oblivious to all the world.

Then directed Mr. Burnham:

"Follow their example, lads. Go to bed, and no more nonsense."

For an instant, Jack and his guest regarded each other, then both sheepishly laughed—which astonished the wide-eyed Carlota even more than their brief fight had done.

"That's all right, little girl. They'll be good friends now. Boys often begin their acquaintance by a 'scrap,' test one another that way, so to speak," explained the station-master.

"I never saw him do such a dreadful thing before. Never—never—never! I—I—it's a

mis'able world! And I wish—I—was in—my own—Refugio!" wailed Carlota.

In her heart, Letitia Burnham echoed that wish, but aloud she cheerfully said:

"It's a pretty good world, after all, my child. But come, you poor, tired dearie. I'm going to put you to sleep in my very own bed; and to show you the prettiest sight in the wide west—I think—nay, I am sure!"

Wondering what this might be and how anything very lovely could be in that dreary place, Carlota sleepily followed her new friend to the inner room.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEXT MORNING

When Carlos awoke he saw Jack standing in the middle of the small room where they had slept, trying to put on his own kid jacket and this absurd attempt of an overgrown youth to squeeze himself into a garment several sizes too small was so absurd that the watcher giggled.

"Hello, you! Laughing at me, are you? I'd like to know why?"

"You can't get into that. Besides, I want it myself."

"Can't have it. It's become the property of Burnham and Co."

"Is it time to get up?"

"Past time. Too late for breakfast."

Jack said this so gravely that Carlos was disturbed, though he lingered to stretch himself thoroughly and to look curiously around the

chamber. Save the shack at which he had been dropped on the evening before it was the barest place he had ever seen. Even a sheep-herder's hut had more of convenience about it, but he had gone to bed in the dark without observing this. After the manner of lads, the pair had long lain awake exchanging confidences, until Mr. Burnham's voice from somewhere had warned them that there must be silence.

"Oh! dear! I wish morning hadn't come so soon!"

"Mid-day, you mean. Near dinner-time. Where'd you get this jacket, anyway? I'd like to shoot a red man and steal one for myself."

"Why don't you, then?"

Jack ceased struggling with the garment and whistled.

"Humph! You're 'sassy,' too. But come on. Get up. Here. The mother has been in and says you are to put on these."

Carlos sat up and stared at the outfit which the facetious Jack held toward him. It consisted of a blue-jean costume, similar to that worn by the trainmen, save that this was clean, if faded, and was one Jack had outgrown.

"Nonsense!"

"Her name is Letitia, if it's Mrs. Burnham you're mentioning."

Carlos sprang up and put on his stockings and moccasins, but failed to find his leggins.

"I want to dress. What have you done with my clothes?"

"I told you the truth. My mother has them. Wait. She shall speak for herself. Mother!"

"Yes, Jack!"

"Isn't this boy to put on my old clothes? He says he won't."

"Dear lady! I never!" he cried, indignantly, to the person without, who answered, promptly:

"For the present, Carlos, it will be better if you wear the things I left for you. After breakfast I will explain. I'm going to cook it now, so please don't delay," returned the voice from without.

"There, Jack Burnham! You're an untruthful boy!" said Carlos, indignantly.

"Hold on! That's serious!"

"Breakfast isn't over."

"It is. Dennis and Mike had theirs two hours ago. I saw them go by the window. They stopped to look in and shake their fists

at you, 'friendly like.' They're good wrestlers, the pair of them. Between us we'll give you plenty of exercise. Hello! Who's that wants to come in? Why?"

"To see my new bruvver."

"Who is that?" asked Carlos.

"That—is the future Governor of New Mexico. Or President of the United States. Teddy Burnham—here you are!"

With that he admitted a dark-headed little four-year-old, very short and fat, and whose brown eyes were the sharpest possible to a childish face. This youngster planted himself firmly just within the room and ordered:

"Boy, come here, Teddy wants to see you."

The stranger laughingly obeyed.

"So you are Jack's brother, eh?"

"Yep. I like the girl to you."

"That's good. Most people do. She's much nicer than I am."

"Yep." agreed the child, unflatteringly. "Now talk Injun."

"I don't know how. Say Jack, I cannot wear these things!" holding up the overalls and making a funny grimace that sent Teddy into a paroxysm of laughter. The effect of his remark

was so unexpected that Carlos, also, laughed, and not to be outdone, Jack joined in the mirth.

"Isn't you d'eadful!" shrieked the baby "Governor," and then they all laughed again.

This served the purpose of putting everybody on good terms; for, despite their confidences of the night, daylight had found the lads secretly shy of one another. Now they coolly faced and scrutinized each other. What Jack saw, we already know; save that Carlos, clad in the rough clothing of a workman, had lost something of his refinement of appearance, while he had gained in manliness. What Carlos saw was an overgrown lad of fifteen, shock-headed, freckled, with arms and legs two sizes too large for his width of chest. A face that was brimful of fun and good nature, honest, gray eyes, and a mouth wide and upturned at the corners over strong white teeth.

Yet, although he instantly liked him, Carlos had a feeling that one could place little dependence upon Jack. As he afterwards expressed it to Carlota: "A fellow anybody could make to do anything that was pleasant but nothing that wasn't."

When they were dressed, Jack opened the

door and pointed out the bench beside the wall, where a tin basin and one coarse towel served the needs of the entire family's toilet.

"I see. Thank you. But isn't there any stream near?"

"Stream? No. Not by a long shot. What you want a stream for?"

"Why, for my bath."

"Are you so dirty? Anything the matter with you that you must wash yourself?"

His face dripping from its plunge in the small basin, the guest looked up, surprised.

"Nothing the matter, except that I haven't dipped—all over—since I left home and I've ridden miles and miles. Of course, I'm dirty. How could I help being?"

Jack whistled.

"Whew! Is that the kind of a fellow you are? Well, then, the sooner you get over such namby-pamby notions the better. This isn't any place for a 'tenderfoot.' "

"I'm not a 'tenderfoot'. I'm a born Westerner. But it's neither decent nor healthy not to keep your body clean," retorted Carlos.

"It'll be healthy for you not to put on any 'frills' here, my Young-Fuss-and-Feathers!

And there's Ma calling us to breakfast. High time, too. I'm hungry enough to eat hay."

Carlos, also, was hungry; and anxious about Carlota, who had been so tired on the previous night; so he hurried into the house. This had but three rooms. The larger was the living room of the family and the waiting place of what few passengers ever entered it. A small desk, where Mr. Burnham kept his accounts, was in one corner, and a table, covered by an oilcloth square, was in the middle.

A girl ran forward from behind this table and clasped Carlos in her closest embrace. For a moment, he did not recognize her. The golden curls which had always been simply brushed, then left to nature's will, were now put back in a rigid little braid that completely altered the child's appearance. Her picturesque garments had been replaced by a blue print frock, ugly in shape and color; while the clumsy skirt which draped her limbs gave them an awkwardness of movement most unlike the hitherto graceful Carlota.

But it was she; and with her soft clinging arms about his neck and her sunshiny smile greeting him, the lad realized that the world was

not yet empty of all he had held dear and familiar.

Jack looked on, amazed by this rapturous embrace between the twins. In that household axpressions of sentiment were rare, save on the mother's part toward little Teddy. She idolized him, and it was he—sleeping rosy and tumbled in his "trundle," whom she had shown to Carlota, at bedtime, as "the prettiest sight in the world."

But—kiss a girl? A boy—a sister? "Whe-e-ew!" said master Jack, and whistled so loudly that the twins loosed their arms and looked at him in surprise that was tinged with alarm. Their experience of yesterday had left them both apprehensive of what might happen next.

"What's the matter?" asked Carlos. Then, since no answer came, he crossed to where Mrs. Burnham was dipping mush from a kettle and gravely bowed over the hand she kindly extended.

"Good morning, Madam. I hope you have rested well."

In her surprise, the poor lady nearly dropped the dish of hot "suppawn." She had already

been touched and gladdened by the earlier civilities of Carlota. They reminded her of a past that was widely different from the present, and of a time when she, too, had had time for the small amenities of life. But to have the lad, also, remember to be courteous sent a faint flush to her cheek and a grateful warmth to her heart.

"Thank you, yes. Fairly well. And you?"

Jack could no longer whistle. He had to sit down in order to properly recognize this "airish" gentlewoman who had stepped into his mother's shoes, and he sat thus, staring, when Carlota discovered him. She went directly to him and offered her hand in greeting, saying:

"Good morning, Jack. Teddy has told me all about you and what a splendid brother you are. I'm sorry I called you a bad boy, last night, but I thought you were going to—to kill my brother."

"Gophers! I guess he ain't easy killed. I—" He hesitated and uneasily glanced toward his mother. He had never felt so big and clumsy. He thought the little girl wasn't half as pretty in his sister's clothes—My! but the mother must have liked her to let her wear them!—as she had been in that queer, Indian

attire of her own. Wow! Wouldn't that plaguey breakfast ever be ready? In his most boyish manner he demanded this and with so much more disrespect than usual that Mrs. Burnham stared, then smiled to herself, as she quietly answered:

"It is ready for those who, also, are ready. But you haven't finished your preparations, my son."

"I'd like to know what you mean?"

She touched her head significantly and he understood. The family comb had done faithful duty on Carlos's curls, but Jack, wishing to impress the "tenderfoot" by his own manly independence had, for once, omitted that part of his toilet which Mrs. Burnham had, hitherto, compelled. Affecting a rude disdain, he now slouched forward to the table, but chanced to look at Carlota.

She still retained that wide, innocent outlook which commonly belongs to earlier childhood, and her blue eyes regarded him with open astonishment. He was a curiosity to her. She had never seen anybody like him. He was on a par with the hand-car, the railway, the Apaches —any and all of the novelties which confronted

her in this land of the strangers. All her life she had been accustomed to the exaggerated courtesy of the Spanish dependents at Refugio and to the exact politeness of her gentleman father, who believed in example rather than precept. These little civilities were as natural as the breath in her nostrils and, above all that, the name of "mother" suggested a personality higher than mortal.

She exclaimed, in a low tone:

"He is saying that—to his—mother!"

"Yes. But, for his own sake and in justice, I will explain that he is exhibiting himself in a new character," observed that lady.

"Why?"

"Ah! why? Probably, my dear, because he is a—boy! A being whose nature, as yet, is all at sixes and sevens; but who will arrive at a true manhood, by and by, please God."

As she spoke she smiled at her son and yet she sighed; and it was due to Carlota that as he hastily left the room he returned an answering smile. When, after a brief delay, he came back his head had been deluged with soapsuds, which still trickled over his blue jumper, and

his shock of hair was plastered as smooth as if it had been glued into place.

Then, while Mrs. Burnham bowed her head in the "silent grace" that was a remnant of her former life, the sun stole through the window of the cabin and touched their reverent forms with a glory all his own. Even so the busy housemistress felt her heart brightened by the presence of these young strangers and silently wondered:

"Are they 'angels unawares'? I have a feeling that they will prove such."

CHAPTER XVII

THE BURNHAMS

When the simple breakfast was over, Mrs. Burnham bade the lads remain indoors for a moment, saying:

"I want to explain to you, Carlos and Carlota, why I had you make this change of clothing. One reason is, you will feel better for putting on fresh, even if plainer garments. I do not suppose you always wore the one costume when you were at home, did you?"

Carlota laughed and replied:

"No, indeed! We had plenty of changes, though all were made the same."

"So I judged. Also that, probably, there are no other children in this country attired in just that fashion."

"My father thought it was the very best sort of dress for us," returned the little girl, earnestly.

"Dear child, I do not doubt it for a moment,

and I wish nobody need be more hampered by their clothes than you have been. I see, too, that those simple skirts you have on now are a burden to you, but you'll soon get used to them. Maybe soon, also, you'll return to your own home and habits."

As she said this she sighed and Teddy shrewdly remarked:

"She doesn't not believe it, though. She allays bweaves herself that-a-way when she doesn't not sepect fings."

They all laughed and the mother exclaimed:

"Why, Teddy! How observant! Yet small boys are not the truest prophets. There are other reasons why it is better you should keep your kid garments—"

"Kid, kidder, kiddest. Kid garments, garments of a kid. A pair of kids," mumbled Jack who had, by this time, quite forgotten the silent rebuke of Carlota's eyes. Carlos heard the monologue and was inclined to resent it but, instead, found himself listening to Mrs. Burnham.

" So I will wrap them carefully, and mark them with your names and addresses. You should keep them with you. The blankets and

the other things which the troopers left with you at Leopard are here in my room. They may be useful to you, and aren't apt to wear out soon. The blankets are the finest I've ever seen, though some of the Indians who pass here, on the march, have those nearly like them."

"They were gifts to our mother. They were woven by some Navajo women to whom she'd been kind. She was always kind to everybody. My father says that she nursed the sick, gave drink to the thirsty, food to the hungry, and rest to the weary. Oh! dear lady, I think you must be like her!" cried Carlota, impulsively.

Letitia Burnham's eyes filled. She had already taken the motherless wanderer into her inmost heart and had welcomed her as a gift from God which she was thankful to retain, even for a little time. Yet she was greatly concerned for her small guests, knowing how slight a thing may turn the current of a life, and how doubtful it was that news of their whereabouts would at once bring their absent father.

Before he had retired, Mr. Burnham had promptly acted upon the suggestions in Captain Sherman's brief note. But, would the telegrams and advertisements reach the eyes for

which they were intended? And the Captain's information had been very scant.

Adrian Manuel had gone "north", but nobody knew where. The children had never been told the name of their great aunt, Mrs. Sinclair, nor even, until the Disbrows' arrival at Refugio, of her existence. Then Miguel had spoken of her as "a wicked old woman", and had honestly considered her such—simply because she gave annoyance to his master. Neither child had mentioned the lawyers save as "enemies", and the further cross-examination which the Captain had intended making in the presence of the station-master—for their mutual benefit—had been forgotten in his hurried departure elsewhere. After he had parted from his little charges he had remembered this fact, but trusted to the station-agent's intelligence to learn what more there was to know.

Moreover, for some time past, Mrs. Burnham had lived in expectation of a removal, and this fact, added to the foregoing, made the children's future a doubtful one.

Household duties were simple in that narrow cabin, and though there was always sewing to be done, that could be taken out of doors. So, as

soon as the place was in order, Mrs. Burnham took Carlota's hand and said:

"Come, I have one other treasure to show you. Bare as this isolated station may seem to you I have learned to love it. We have lived here for some years and were only temporarily at Leopard. I didn't wish to go there and was glad to come back, because of—that!"

Carlota's gaze followed the pointing finger. At some little distance from the cluster of buildings was a small heap of stones. Around the heap there had been set a slender fence of tule reeds, strung together by strips of the same growth. A cactus, larger than ordinary and loaded with brilliant flowers, stood at one end of the enclosure while at the other a struggling tree made a bit of shade. A rude shed had been fixed beyond the spot, and within this a bench, whereon Mrs. Burnham and Carlota now sat down.

"What lovely blossoms! We have some cacti of that kind in our mother's garden."

"This one blooms—in my child's."

The girl looked up in surprise, but instantly understood. She slipped her hand into the mother's and softly asked:

"Was it long ago?"

"Five years. She would have almost been a woman now and I often think what she would have been to me as such. Then I look abroad and am glad she is not here to suffer the intolerable loneliness of the plains. The young are not fond of solitude. Her name was Mary."

"Why, my own mother's name! I'm glad of that. Maybe she wouldn't have suffered. Anyway, you know she doesn't now. My father says that though our mother was so very, very happy on this earth, she is far happier now, with God."

"Dear little comforter, so I try to believe of my own daughter" said the woman, laying her hand on Carlota's head.

"Was that her cactus?"

"Yes. She set it here. Her father planted the tree, which a brakeman brought her from a distant station. There were other things here, too, but they are gone. At first, I felt too desolate to care for them, and, when I had rallied so that I could, it was too late. Yet since it was here that she had made her garden it was here I had her put to rest."

Carlota looked curiously at the stones.

Away off in the distance, also, she could see beside the track another of the dead cattle which had so frightened her while on the hand-car. Mrs. Burnham noticed the glance and answered it:

"We had to put the tule reeds as a precaution against the coyotes."

The girl shivered and exclaimed:

"How dreadful! Yet the stones don't make any difference. The dear God knows about her, just the same. And—and—the cactus is very beautiful."

"Yes, dear, yes. 'The cactus is very beautiful.' There is no life so dark or barren but may have its cactus bloom. Now since you have told me all about yourself I'll tell you what is needful you should know about this Burnham family. It will do for the 'story' that Teddy is always begging."

She smiled upon the little man who now approached, with his fat hands full of a rare yellow blossom which he offered to Carlota.

"Posies, girl, for you."

"Thank you, *niño*. You're a darling, darling baby! I do love flowers better than—than almost anything, I guess."

Teddy climbed up beside her and watched as, almost unconsciously, she began to pull one of the strange blooms to pieces.

"Girl! No, no! You mustn't bweak them. It might hurt them, my muvver says."

"I'm not hurting it, Teddy. See? Little by little, I take it apart, gently, for I'm trying to find out its name. Though, maybe, Señora, you know it?"

"No. I've not seen them often. But—at your age—do you understand botany?"

"I don't understand it—much. Only, most always, if I have a new plant I can find its class and, often, its genus. Like this. Don't you know?"

"Once I knew. I was a teacher in my girlhood." The sight of the child analyzing the desert flower had carried the exile's thoughts back over many years, to a pleasant New England school-room and a class of eager maidens who learned from her. Yet she promptly banished her momentary regret, reflecting: "The cactus is very beautiful! And my blessings do outnumber my deprivations."

It was a wonderfully skillful young hand which dissected the unknown flower and, when

it lay with all its parts separated and arranged, Mrs. Burnham's interest was as great as Teddy's. Eager to see, he thrust his dark head between Carlota and her "subject" in a way that hindered her study, so she left its finishing until another time.

"I'll put the rest of the blossoms in my box, Teddy, but I'm quite sure it's an orchid. I think it is a 'Plantanthera.' I do miss my father so about flowers. He knows everything and everyone there is, I s'pose."

"I thought that looked like a 'botany box,' when I saw Dennis take it off the car, last night. Yet, I could hardly believe I saw one—here."

"Oh! yes. We always take our things. Carlos has his hammer. My father teached him, taught him, I mean, about stones, 'cause he doesn't care so much for flowers. Now, please tell me the story. I love stories as well as Teddy, prob'ly. Old Marta knows heaps of them but Gaudalupo knows even more. Beg pardon. I'll stop talking and listen."

Yet Mrs. Burnham hesitated a little, trying to decide how much it was necessary Carlota should know; though impelled by the girl's abounding sympathy to talk freely of matters

usually kept to herself. Carlota helped her, laughingly:

"I know. When I want to tell a story and the words don't come right away I always begin: 'Once upon a time'."

The lady smiled, took a fresh needleful of thread, turned the stocking she was darning, and began:

"Well, 'once upon a time,' my husband's father died, very suddenly, leaving behind him a large debt to a rich woman from whom he had borrowed money to carry on his business—that failed. His two children, Teddy's father and his Aunt Ella, determined to pay this debt and clear their father's name and honor. She became a trained nurse and is now in a New York hospital. She has a fine position and good salary and is steadily putting aside part of it, toward her share of the debt. But she works very, very hard and it is a fresh trouble to Mr. Burnham that he isn't able to provide for himself. He came west to engage in mining, and has made several ventures in that line. Until now none of them have turned out as he hoped, so he took this position till he saw his way to a fresh start. He thinks he sees now the way to

leave here very soon. I hope that before we go your friends will have come for you. If not, you may have to be left with other strangers, and I thought best to prepare you; and you understand, now, why I wish you to keep all of your belongings together. But—that's all. If you could so soon become to me like one of my own, why shouldn't you to another just as easily."

It was like Carlota to think first of others, nor had she fully realized the result to herself if her new friends departed before she was "called for." The word "mining" had roused familiar ideas and she exclaimed:

"Oh! I do wish my father was here to see about Mr. Burnham's mine! He would know in a minute if it was a good one!"

"But, deary, we have no mine—yet, nor the slightest interest in one. We are merely 'prospecting'—"

"Beg pardon. Oh, that's what my father does!"

"Has he a mine of his own?" asked the settler's wife, with almost pitiful eagerness.

"No, indeed! He doesn't wish one. It's just his business to—to location them. I'd

better ask Carlos, or you would. He knows more about it than I do."

Then, as the rumble of an approaching train startled her, she sprang up and frantically waved her hand to Carlos and Jack, who were hunting gophers on the plain beyond the track.

"Oh! they'll be rolled on and killed! The train—the cars—my brother!"

Mrs. Burnham rose and took the little girl's hand.

"There, there, child! No trains can hurt you or anybody if you keep away from the rails. Try to look upon them as the pleasantest things of our days, and you'll soon get over your fear. Now, you and Teddy play by yourselves. I see that Mr. Burnham wishes to speak with me, before this train arrives."

CHAPTER XVIII

A ROUGH KNIGHT ERRANT

"Letitia, that woman we owe was on the train that stopped here last night. She was one of those who spoke to these Manuel children and the sight of her clinched my anxiety to get away."

"That—woman? Are you sure?"

"I reckon I can't be mistaken in the face of the person who has held a mortgage on my life so long. The queer thing is, I overheard her say she'd 'crossed the continent a dozen times' —that I never chanced to see her before. Now —shall I send word ahead that the new man can have my place?"

"So—soon, dear?"

"Capable operators and agents aren't as thick as sage brush hereabouts. Especially those willing to live at—Tuttle! I owe something to the company I've served so long and— I mustn't lose this chance. The traces I found

—I'm sure this venture'll pan out well—I hate to uproot you from your home, poor as it is, but I hope to give you a better. Shall I send word, 'Yes?' Here she comes!"

"Ye-es," faltered the wife, hurriedly turning houseward to hide the tears which had started to her eyes. To leave the home itself was less to her than leaving the stone-covered grave beside it. However, frail as she was, she was a loyal wife and sunshiny woman, and she made the best of the matter. She would at once begin her preparations, but her heart was heavy with forebodings concerning the children so unexpectedly placed in her care.

Mr. Burnham had lost no time in carrying out the suggestions of Captain Sherman's note. He had sat up late on the night of its arrival dispatching and receiving messages concerning them. He had even supplemented the cavalryman's directions by inquiries of his own, for when all was summed up that officer's facts had been meager, indeed.

As Mrs. Burnham thought, it was fortunate that the new station-master could not arrive at Tuttle till the end of two weeks; and during those fourteen days her husband made fresh ef-

forts to trace the children's friends, anxiously scanning every mail and listening to every wire —and all without result.

What had seemed to Captain Sherman and, at first, even to Mr. Burnham, the simplest matter in the world became impossible to accomplish; and all because of a chain of circumstances, each trivial in itself.

The letters and messages sent to Lanark, the nearest postoffice to Refugio, remained unclaimed and undelivered, because on the very night of Pablo's arrival at the mission, Miguel had left it and had not returned. Nobody else there sent to Lanark, nor did the indolent mail-and-telegraph-agent trouble to forward any matter to Refugio, since he knew that both its master and manager were absent.

When he left home after failing to draw further information from Pablo than the agave leaf contained, Miguel set off at once on a search of his own; and by a strange chance came to that glen in the mountains where Benoni lay dead among the dead Apaches. Always hasty in judgment, the distracted fellow now leaped to the conclusion that his beloved "small ones" were also dead—or worse—were in captivity,

and that thereafter life held only torment for him. He would never dare to look upon Adrian Manuel's face again; and, though he still carried the sealed letter which was to be opened at the end of two months, he resolved to go where none could find him till that time came. Then—"what shall be will be!" he concluded, and mounting the horse which supplied Amador's place, he rode away southward and was seen no more.

The Disbrows, also, left at once, and reached a remote little town on their homeward way, when the elder gentleman was suddenly stricken with a serious illness. Indeed he was so extremely ill that, Mr. Rupert, who would otherwise have been eager to secure and read all newspapers, had neither time nor thought for anything save nursing his father back to health, or, at least, to a physical condition fit for travel. He did, however, seize an opportunity to dispatch a message to Mrs. Sinclair; confident that her energy would be sufficient to trace her "Mary's children," should they still be alive.

But Mrs. Sinclair was at that time on her journey across the continent, and the servant left in charge of her home received the message

and mislaid it. She had not dared to break the seal and read it, or she might have told it promptly on her mistress's arrival. As it was, fearing the sharp rebukes which would have been given her, she kept the matter secret, trusting in her heart that "it couldn't have amounted to anything or another would have followed."

Adrian Manuel, the longed for father, lay a prisoner between hospital walls, and in imminent danger of never leaving them alive. He was so critically ill that he was oblivious to all that went on about him, nor were the advertising columns of a newspaper of any interest to the quiet nurse who attended him; and who, because of his hazardous condition, allowed no less experienced person to care for him.

This was the reason of his mysterious journey "to the north." The knowledge of his serious malady had come to him with startling suddenness and he had made instant preparation to place himself under the best surgical treatment. He would not sadden his happy little ones by his own forebodings and had ridden bravely away with a gay "*Adios!*" to meet his fate. Should he not return, the sealed letter

provided for everything, and especially, that the twins were then to be taken to Mrs. Sinclair, who thus would be left their natural and only guardian.

So, when the two weeks expired and the Burnhams could no longer delay departure they decided that the young Manuels must accompany them. The new station-master was a rough old miner, unmarried, and though efficient in the duties he assumed, he liked to keep a lot of such men as himself about him. To leave Carlota in such an establishment, even on the now fading chance of her father's claiming her, seemed impossible to Mrs. Burnham.

But the child, herself, strenuously protested against this departure. Captain Sherman's lecture upon "Obedience" had vividly impressed her.

"He said to stay was right. I'd made trouble enough not obediencing before and I must. He was a soldier—he knew. We must not go away from this straight railroad track, not at all. We can live at Leopard with Dennis, if we can't live with the new folks."

Whereat that fine fellow answered without delay:

"Sure, me purty colleen, 'tis meself 'd be proud to have the carin' of ye, so it would. More by token ye're a born lady, so ye be. But, faith, if the family's going to dig gold out of the mountains beyant, Dennis Fogarty's the man must have a fist in that same. Och! It's the truth I am speakin'."

Mr. Burnham clinched the argument, saying:

"That cuts your last plank from under you, my dear. Never mind. I shall leave directions what is to be done when you are sent for and how we may be followed. We start to-morrow morning, at sunrise."

At the hour they named they did so. A canvas-covered wagon containing a camper's outfit and drawn by four old—therefore experienced—horses, left the little station platform for a "Castle in Spain." Yet, despite Letitia Burnham's feeling that it might prove only that, she was cheerful over the departure, seeing her husband happy at resuming what he called "the business of his life," and that he now believed would be successful. He had often, on similar settings-out, been equally sanguine, but the good wife was not one to remind him of that. Besides, as she confided to Carlota:

"After all's said and done, away down in their hearts all human beings love a little vagabondizing!"

So, though her eyes filled as she glanced toward her Mary's grave she was still able to smile upon Teddy, lifting him into the wagon and, rather hastily, climbing in beside him.

"I think it will be lovely, even though it doesn't seem right for us—Carlos and me. But we shall like it. We're used to sleeping out of doors and it will be like a long, all-summer picnic, won't it?"

"I hope so. Of course, there will be hard realities. The worst is sometimes wanting water. It's a thirsty, thirsty land, this New Mexico. But—'The Lord will provide'."

Carlota ran on in front and joined her brother and his comrade, Jack; and, presently, to their surprise there came to them the sound of Letitia Burnham—singing! A low, sweet hymn, whose burden was thanksgiving.

"Gophers! The mother at that business? Hold on! Hark!" cried Jack, who could scarcely believe his own ears.

"Your father is singing with her. That's all," said Carlota.

"That's all, is it? 'All?' Well, then, Saynyereeter, let me tell you that I, John Winterbottom Burnham, can't remember that, during the whole course of my checkered career, I ever heard my respected respectable parents warble before!"

"You—disrespectful boy!"

"What have I done now? Can't a fellow call attention to the talents of his parents without being accused of disrespect?" he demanded, in affected astonishment.

They all laughed. They were in a mood to find even trifles amusing. There was not a cloud in that wonderful sky; the blue was almost too radiantly deep. There was a clearness in the air which rendered the distant mountains closely visible, and the expanse which lay between them and these hills of delight seemed less a solitude than did that central plain, marked by its one line of shining steel.

"Behold, my friends! We go out—paupers; we return—millionaires!" declared Jack, proudly strutting beside his "team." These four venerable "campaigners," who had been

chosen because of their familiarity with plain and mountain life, were the first horses with which he had ever been familiar. The days of his parents' former wanderings a-field had been too early for him to recall.

"Hmm. That front beast on the left has a spavin," remarked Carlos, musingly.

"Huh! What's that? Spavin! Spavin! I'd have you understand, young Trot-and-go-barefoot, you—that what I don't know about horseflesh isn't worth knowing."

Carlos looked on, questioningly. He rarely knew whether Jack were jesting or in earnest; but, either way, he found that having a boy companion was so delightful that he was inclined to rather neglect Carlota, with whom his time had always been passed. At that same moment, up came Dennis, riding a vicious little beast which was doing its utmost to unseat the unaccustomed horseman.

"Dennis! Dennis, on a broncho!" cried young Burnham, stopping his leader's progress, to await this fresh arrival. "We thought you had petered out, Dennis, me friend! Sickened of the job and gone back to

straightening the ties. Where did you get that nag, eh? and what are you doing with that unhappy burro?"

"Whoa, I tell ye! Whist! to the heels of ye! So, so. Yes, I know, I know. There, there! Quiet, me beautiful boy! So, so—so-o!"

The wild little horse had been nearly maddened by the treatment of its new owner. It had been checked up till its neck was half-twisted out of shape, while a facetious trackman had persuaded Dennis to put on spurs of an exaggerated size.

As soon as the broncho neared the other horses it quieted its movements and, as if to give the children a chance to contemplate its rider in all his glory, planted its forefeet firmly in the sand and stood stockstill.

"Och! Dennis, me boy! Sure 'tis yourself that's magnificent, entirely!" mocked Jack, clapping his hands to his breast with a tragic air.

Nor, though they tried, could the twins help laughing.

"If Miguel could see!" cried Carlos, hurrying forward to examine the Irishman's outfit.

This was truly gorgeous. He had purchased

it from a passing Mexican *vaquero.* It consisted of much adorned, leathern breeches; a gay silk shirt and sash; a fine *serape* (cloak), thrown carelessly over one shoulder; a handsome *sombrero;* long boots, such as no Mexican would have parted with, save from dire necessity; a heavy, clumsy saddle; and a bridle, rich in ornament. Altogether, a fine and picturesque outfit, that might serve well in some *fiesta* procession, but likely to prove troublesome on the present trip.

Carlota soon stopped laughing. Even though she could see in the depths of the "schooner" the amused faces of Mr. and Mrs. Burnham, she feared that Dennis might be more sensitive than he appeared and he, certainly, had spared nothing to do justice to the occasion.

"It surely is a nice little pony, Dennis. But I've only seen you walking the track or on a hand-car and I didn't know you were a horseman;" she remarked.

"Faith, it wouldn't be much of a man that couldn't bestride the back of a beast, now would it, little lady? It's ridin' I haven't been doin', belike, but that's neither here nor there.

It's ridin' I shall be from this on, and why not? But, how do ye like me new clothes, Miss Carlota?"

"They are very grand, Dennis. I've seen such at *fiestas*, yet, on ordinary days they've been put away very carefully. I hope you won't hurt them in the mountains. Why, your *sombrero* is finer than mine, and much more adorned."

"Sure it is that, now ain't it?" said Dennis, well pleased. "But ye're not askin' a word about t'other fine beast I'm a leadin', me dear."

"I suppose that is for your—your—pack, isn't it. Or to rest you and the broncho when he is tired."

Now, indeed, was Dennis Fogarty a happy man! Almost from the first he had become Carlota's slave, and the Burnhams were glad of it, for he added to her enjoyment. They suspected that he had for her sake decided to go mining; and, also, for her sake, had Carlota known it, that he had expended his dollars in the purchase of this decorative outfit.

"Sure, little lady, is it only that deceivin' Meegell (Miguel) that can wear the handsome

contraptions, belike? 'Twas meself an' Mickey Grady as thought the matther out. A *sombrero* is it? What then? So have I. Sayrappy? Faith, I warrant here's one to be proud of. And a burro, says you? Now how'd this purty grayish-whitey be pleasin' yerself? Eh, me little lady?"

Even yet Carlota did not comprehend what Dennis thought he had made so plain.

"He's a pretty little creature. Indeed, he is much like one I used to have at home. Carlos had one all beautifully marked with brown and white, but mine was just a mouse-colored dear, as like this one as—as one star is like another. You have made a good choice, I think, Dennis."

Then was the Irishman's felicity complete. He slipped from his broncho and bowing low before his "little lady," offered her the leading strap of the "mouse-colored dear."

"Then sure, Miss Carlota, ye'll be doin' me that proud by acceptin' this same, as a token o' friendship, belike. And I'd admire to be seein' how ye fits on his back."

"For—me? You have bought that pretty creature for me? Why, Dennis, Dennis!"

"That same is me name, an' no shame to it; barrin' ye'll have none of the beast."

"But, I'll have all of him, indeed! Oh! thank you, thank you!"

Her delight and the way in which she clapped her little brown hands nearly turned the brain of the generous Irishman. Hitherto, he had known but hard toil and the rough side of life, but Carlota represented to him something wholly different; and the chivalry which is latent in every manly breast, no matter how humble, roused him to become her champion and protector. Moreover, he was very jealous of the unknown Miguel, of whom both children talked with such sincere affection. To Mike Grady, alone, had Dennis confided his ambition:

"I'll take the shine off that 'Greaser' or I'll spend the last cent I ever will earn. Mind that, now;" and, after he had arrayed himself in his finery, he had asked: "Do ye think, Mickey boy, that the 'Greaser' 'll look grander nor me, the day?"

Faithful to friendship as to wrestling, Mike had replied and meant it:

"Sure, there never was man under sun so fine as yourself the morn, Dennis, me lad."

Carlota felt really touched and grateful as she cried:

"All gray, with that pretty white blaze on his face! What is his name, dear Dennis?"

"Name is it? If he has one, 'tis more nor I know. Let me lift ye on, please."

She could easily have stepped into the low saddle, but she recognized that he wished to "swing her up," as Miguel used to do upon some of the spirited horses at Refugio; so she let him lift her, all clumsily and delightedly, and settled herself in her place with a laugh of satisfaction.

"He's lovely! He shall be called Connemara, for your home. It's a pretty long name for a pretty small beast, but what he lacks in size he makes up in his cog-cognomen. That's right, I think."

It was entirely right to the happy donor.

"Connemara, says she. Hear to it, all. Connemara, for me own purty home. Sure it's proud am I—"

A shriek—a chorus of voices broke in upon his happiness:

"Dennis! Dennis! The broncho! The—bronch—is—gone!"

CHAPTER XIX

HAPPENINGS BY THE WAY

Presentation civilities were cut short. Dennis wheeled round, then became motionless. For a moment he had left his new horse to its own self, carelessly dropping the bridle, as he slipped off its back—a fact none observed save the broncho himself. He did; and when a fitting moment arrived he flung up his heels and was off, over the plain.

For poor Dennis it was a swift and bitter descent from the height of joy to the depth of woe. His grief was almost tragic, and Mr. Burnham had to look away from the face under the *sombrero,* it was so wholly Irish and un-Mexican.

"Me horse! Me horse! Och! But I'm undone. Sure, 'tis not I can walk all the way to them mountains beyant. Me horse! Me horse!"

"Dennis dear, you shall have the burro back.

Don't you worry about walking. Though I'm sorry the broncho ran away," said Carlota soothingly, and slipped from "Connemara" before the other could prevent.

"Burro—be bothered!"

"Why—Dennis!"

"Beggin' yer pardon, me dear; but after all the money I've spent on the beast. Ochone! Arrah musha, the day!"

The trackman was grievously disappointed. Of what use his fine attire if he must return to walking the rails? As for going to the mines, unmounted, he would never do that; and he would travel barefoot anywhere rather than take the gift he had made.

"Connemara, is it? His legs is too short an' mine is too long. They'd drag on the ground, so they would."

Carlota ceased to argue the matter. Her attention and that of the others had been called to Carlos who, upon the broncho's flight, had not wasted breath upon anybody but had set off in instant pursuit. "As swift as an arrow." He had been trained by an Indian and could run like one. As he sped over it, his moccasined feet scarcely touched the ground, and his lithe

body seemed poised as lightly as a bird's in its flight. As he ran his sister cried exultantly:

"See Carlos! Oh! see Carlos! He'll catch him! He will—he will!"

She clapped her hands, lustily. Her eyes shone and her cheeks flushed. It was impossible to look at her and not share her enthusiasm.

"Oh! I haven't seen him run like that since the last Easter *fiesta*. Then there were such races! But he won them nearly all. My father says there can be no muscles better trained than my brother's, if he cares to exerter—exercise—them. See! See! He has his *riata*.[1] He will throw it. He gains—he gains!"

He might have succeeded in any case but this particular broncho was less swift than vicious. Also, he was burdened by a lot of useless trappings, which irritated and hindered him, and this was in Carlos's favor.

The whole cavalcade had stopped when Dennis rode up to join it, but Mr. Burnham now directed Jack to go forward.

"Keep to the road, son, in the way the runaway took. I meant to go straight north, toward that first range, but this affair alters our

[1] Lasso.

course for the present. Dennis, if you're tired, climb in here with us; or ride one of the team, as you choose."

"Sure, 'tis neither ridin' nor drivin' I'll be doin' the now. Hold! I declare that's the smartest cleverest one in the world! See! See the speed of him! He's winnin'—he's winnin', the little gossoon!"

The Irishman was again radiant. A contest of any sort was "victuals an' drink" to him. He made Carlota remount Connemara, and marched along beside her, "as stiff as he was stout," yet growing more and more excited.

"The *riata!* The *riata!* How glad I am he took it, and he had nothing else except his own nimble feet!" cried Carlota, in pride at the prowess of her twin.

"Yes, I know, I know. He wasn't like some, so he wasn't, more boast nor boost," rejoined Dennis, casting a disdainful glance upon Jack, who was booted and spurred in a manner only second to his own, though the lad's regalia was extremely "second-hand" and had mostly been acquired by methods which would have greatly displeased his parents.

At this, Carlota turned her gaze from her

brother to Jack, with that surprised expression that always disconcerted him, and, for the first time, fully observed his attire. Then she demanded:

"Why, boy, what are you going to fight? A bowie knife—a pair of rusty pistols—a gun! How an Apache, or a wild cat, would run if he saw you! But look! Carlos has caught the broncho—he surely has!"

This was so, and attention now centered upon the approaching victor of the race.

"A lad is swifter than a horse!" cried the sister, waving her *sombrero* in congratulation to her brother.

They speedily met and, leaping down from the now subdued animal, Carlos handed the bridle to Dennis, saying:

"There, good friend! That saves your walking."

"Thanks to ye, me boy! Sure, you're the slick smartest one ever lived. You're quite fit to be brother to your sister, so ye be, an' that's more'n I could say for aught other young body I know," with another meaning glance in Jack's direction.

But, just then, that youth had no attention

for the trackman. He was curiously examining Carlos's *riata.* He had always aspired to be a cowboy, and believed that a first step toward this exalted state would be by the use of a lasso. So he asked:

"Will you show me that trick, Carlos? Do it and I'll give you one of my 'irons;' and if you'll sell me the lariat I'll give you my jackknife."

Carlos had never heard of "swapping." Rather surprised, he looked up and promptly replied:

"Of course I'll show you—if I can. It's not much to do. You just throw it, you know, and it does the rest of the work."

"Yes, I see. It's easy, real easy. I could do it myself if I wanted to. I just thought, maybe, you'd like to show me. Might make you feel as if—as if—" Jack stammered and stopped. He had been ready to add: "as if you were of some use in our family;" but reflected that the remark would have offended his hospitable parents.

"As if what?" asked Carlos, when Jack hesitated, confused.

"Oh! nothing. If you don't want to you

needn't, Mr. Throw-a-rope. I can trade with some other fellow. Likely we'll meet a cowboy before night, anyway."

Carlos laughed.

"His lasso is the last thing any cowboy will part with. It is his most useful possession and he often spends large sums of money on it. A *vaquero* gave my father one that is worth—Oh! a fabulous price. We keep it in a place of honor in the hall, for it's made of the finest horsehair from thoroughbred stock, and has bands of silver where the lengths are joined, every little way. It is beautiful, and so slender you can hold it all in your palms."

"You won't swap this, then?"

"I couldn't. It was a gift and nobody sells a gift, but you may use it all you wish."

"How can I, if you carry it all the time?"

"Sure enough! But wait. Some time, soon, I'll tell you why I can't let you have it just yet —even as a loan."

Dennis was now on the broncho's back, and Carlos ran alongside to give the inexperienced horseman a few hints that were useful.

"Sure, an' I s'pose you've always been a-

horseback, me boy?'' asked the grateful and admiring fellow.

''Nearly. I've never walked when I could ride, and when I've walked I've always run! So that's an Irish speech for you, Dennis.''

''Carlos shall ride Connemara quite half the time,'' said Carlota, who had joined them and who felt sorry that her brother was not, also, mounted.

''Ride a burro? After Benoni? Well, no, indeed! Burros are nice for girls, though even you, Carlota—''

He paused as she warningly shook her head but Dennis had no attention for anything except his broncho and was himself getting on very well. His pride in his skill and his accoutrements increased and the twins dropped behind to have a little ''talk.''

Carlota had noticed a look on her brother's face that she did not like and promptly asked:

''What's the matter, Carlos dear?''

''Nothing.''

''You are unhappy. Tell me, darling.''

''It's that boy, Jack. He makes me feel—feel—he's so boastful over those old pack-

horses, that we'd turn out in the field to die at home, Carlota?"

"Yes, dear."

"Everybody but me is mounted."

"You may have the whole of Connemara. I'll ride in the big 'schooner'."

"I want you not to tell anybody—any single person—but I'm going to get myself a horse, a beauty!"

"How?"

"I'm going to catch a wild horse from a herd I saw. But don't say one word to the others till I come riding up on its back. I'll lag behind now and nobody will notice when I slip over the plain."

"Oh! I hate to have you go! There's nobody here who is my very own except you, Carlos, heart of my life."

"But I'm coming back—in an hour or two."

"My father went away. Are you going to the 'north' as he did, brother?"

"A little way 'north,' and you're to tell nobody till I come riding back on a new Benoni. Now, *Adios, niña!*[1] Watch out for me—thus!"

[1] Farewell, little girl.

He waved his arms above his head, kissed his finger tips to her as Miguel would have done, and darted northward. She watched him through her tears and with a sinking heart, yet tried to remember his promise: "In an hour or two." Then she rejoined the others and kept a faithful "watch out" all that long day; but even when the sun went down her brother had not returned.

CHAPTER XX

THE SIEGE OF CORK

Even the possession of his broncho could not long fill the mind of Dennis to the exclusion of his "little lady." Having missed her from the party in advance of the wagon he halted and let that pass, then retraced his way to where she was slowly approaching, alone.

"Sure, Miss Carlota, this is the botherin' beast! If I wants him to go forard it's backard he will; an' if backard—then forard's the word. What would ye be doin' to him if he was yours, if ye please?"

"I don't know. I never 'broke' a horse, though I've often seen others do it. Miguel says that either a man or his horse must be master and that there's no peace till it's settled. He believes in making a final thing of it, once for all."

"Faith, I'm not thinkin' I'd like the 'Greaser' overmuch but, all the same, a body

must give—um, um—his due. I'll have to tussle the thing out, bime by, I trow."

Then he looked at her wondering to see traces of tears on her face. Pulling the forelock which dangled below his sombrero, he asked:

"An' who's been makin' ye cry, this fine mornin', Miss Carlota?"

"Nobody. Nobody, at all. It was foolish, but see? I am not now," and she smiled into his troubled face.

"But where is the little gossoon, me dear? Sure, I've a mind to go halves with him in this creatur' o' mine. That boy Jack, beyant, who doesn't know horse from mule nor t'other from which, is so set up an' flairboyant, I must take him down a peg. Never mind, says I to myself. Wait a bit, Dennis, me boy, says I. 'Tis a half of a horse master Carlos shall have now, but a whole one bime-by."

"Why, Dennis! What do you mean? How do you know? I thought it was to be a surprise!" cried Carlota.

"Sure, an isn't it? We'll speak never a word, you an' me, till we meets up with a beast what wants to be sellin' himself an' then—out goes the wind from Jack's sails—kerflump!"

"Oh! is that all? I thought you meant something different;" and she smiled again, anticipating the moment when Carlos should return, riding a beautiful animal which had cost him nothing but his own prowess. "But, Dennis, what is your broncho's name?"

"Name, says you? Humph! That's more nor I know meself. But, bein's he's a new master why not a new name? Eh? An' is it yourself will be doin' the honor to speak it?"

"Oh! I thank you, but I couldn't. I've named one animal already to-day and I may have to name another—I mean—I'd rather you did it yourself. Dennis, though it was kind of you to think I might. What shall it be?"

"Belike—it may not be—anything! Whoa, there! Whoa, I tell ye!"

"You're pulling too tight on that bridle. Maybe, he thinks you want him to stand on his head—drawing him like that! Oh, Dennis, Dennis! Don't. Do take it easily. Your fingers are clinched and your teeth set as if you were in terror. That's not the way to ride, no, no; and I've told you once, already."

"What then? What's 'once' to a stupid like

me? Ain't this the right grip o' the thing—so?"

"No, indeed! You should see Miguel. His touch is like a feather on the rein yet—so firm! Amador would neither disobey him nor obey anybody else. See. This way. Don't squeeze your hand so tight. You look, Dennis, you do look as if you were in—agony!"

The poor fellow was. He would a thousand times rather have been striding along upon his own stout feet than riding that uncomfortable thing. The saddle had become a throne of torment. His great boots seemed like lead. His hat flopped in his eyes, his buckskin jacket gave him a vapor bath, and his spurs got into the wrong places, goading rather than guiding the broncho.

Carlota suggested:

"S'pose we wait and rest a bit, and I'll give you another lesson. Good. First, now name him. Then we'll talk to him by his name till he learns it, and finds that new, better behavior is expected of him."

"All right, me little lady. That there Meegell rests now an' again, I s'pose?"

"Surely. Did you think that he rode all the time?"

Dennis had so thought. The vivid picture in his imagination was of a dark and handsome horseman sitting upright in his saddle and careering at breakneck speed over hill and plain.

"The name, Dennis. Let's stick to that, first."

"Acushla! What says you to—Cork?"

"Cork! Cork? Is he a cork? Beg pardon, but I don't quite understand."

Somewhat nettled, the Irishman responded:

"Faith, 'tis simple, thinks I. If Connemara, what's a town, is a good name for a no-account creatur' of a burro, can't Cork, what's a city, be right for a horse? Eh? A city's finer nor a town an' a horse nor a donkey, says I."

"That seems sensible. Cork isn't as musically, I mean musical, as Connemara, and your broncho isn't as pretty a beast. But it's short and easy to say when you get—angry—so often, poor Dennis!"

"Who-a-a, there! Stand still. Be easy, easy, lad! Cork—Cor—rk, C-O-R-K! !"

Carlota backed away and gave the broncho and his master a wide space. She was half-

frightened, half-amused, for matters between them had, evidently, reached a crisis. The animal upraised, and so suddenly, that Dennis was unseated and slipped down over its back in a manner neither flattering to his vanity nor helpful to his temper. Then, from somewhere about his person, he produced a short, stout stick, with which he belabored the equally furious beast as if death were the object at wnich he aimed.

"Oh! you cruel, cruel man! He'll kill you—or you him! Dennis—Cork! Oh! Dennis, Dennis!" screamed Carlota, lustily.

The wagon, now some distance in front, came to a halt, for the girl's cries had reached and startled its occupants, so that Mr. Burnham and Jack ran back to see what caused the uproar. Yet, at that critical moment, even they dared not interfere. They ranged themselves beside Carlota and silently watched the strange contest.

"If 'tis a fight ye be wantin' 'tis a fight ye shall have!" yelled the trackman, now indifferent to everything save the rebellious beast for which he had spent his hardly earned dollars. His blood was up, his spirits rose. "Sure, I

thought me daily exercise was gone entirely, seein' I'd left me friend Mickey behind. Come on, then, I'm the man for ye!" he panted.

The battle which ensued was against all rules of horse training and more in the line of warfare to which the Irishman was accustomed; but, even in the fiercest of the mêlée Dennis retained a firm hold upon the bridle rein. Because of carelessness, he would never again lose his precious broncho. The spectators beheld a dangerous mixture of legs, heads, and hoofs; heard the continued whack, whack, of the shillalah, and anticipated mortal hurt to the ignorant trackman. Then—the mustang lay prone upon the ground and Dennis stood above it—master!

"Faith, that settles it! From this on, Fogarty's boss!"

"O, Dennis! You've hurt him cruelly, cruelly, I'm afraid!" said Carlota, slipping off her burro to kneel beside the prostrate brute and tenderly pat his head.

For the conqueror, she had no word of compassion, though he looked much the worse of the two. His fine attire was torn and dust-covered, his face scratched and bleeding, one of his

gigantic spurs broken, and his gay sash in ribbons. Yet there was an expression of supreme content upon his features and his labor-bowed shoulders held themselves with a new and martial bearing.

" 'See, the conquering hero comes!' " mocked Jack, and waved his hat ecstatically.

Not a muscle of Dennis moved. Rigidly grand and imperturbable, he stood a monument for all to see. When sufficient silence was obtained for the full effect of his superiority he commanded, with great dignity:

"Cork, get up!"

The animal glanced at the man who stood above him; then, meekly as any burro might, the forever-tamed broncho staggered to its feet. With a look toward the still kneeling Carlota, which asked as plain as speech—"Could your Meegell beat that?" Mr. Fogarty slipped the bridle over his arm and airily strode away.

CHAPTER XXI

FOLLOW YOUR LEADER

"Carlota, where is your brother?"

"I do not know where he is now, Mrs. Burnham. He went—went away by himself for a little distance," answered the girl, flushing painfully.

"Went away? By himself? Why?" exclaimed Mr. Burnham, in surprise.

They had stopped to eat their luncheon of bread and milk, intending or, at least, hoping to reach in time for supper some spot where there would be water when Mrs. Burnham would prepare something hot and palatable.

"I—I cannot tell you."

"Do you know?"

"Yes, Mr. Burnham."

"Why can't you tell, then?"

"Because I promised not."

"Why, my dear. This is serious. Has any-

thing gone wrong?'' persisted her host, yet with great kindness of manner.

''No, I think not. But, if you please, I would rather not talk.''

In her own mind she was sure that something might have gone very wrong, indeed. The suggested ''hour or two'' had stretched to twice that time, and still he had not come in sight. Nothing that moved was visible across the mighty plain and its silence seemed intolerable. The railroad gleamed in the sunshine till it dwindled in the distance to a mere point and vanished. Beside it ran a bordering road of earth whereon the slower wheels of wagons could crawl east or west; and along this, at intervals pitifully short, were skeletons of cattle, so ghastly and suggestive that, looking upon them, Carlota's heart filled with dread of her brother's fate.

She couldn't eat. Even when, moved by her evident distress though annoyed by her silence, Mrs. Burnham made an especial dainty and offered it.

''Thank you. You are very, very kind. If you're willing, I'll take it for Carlos.''

''Certainly. But I must say it is the height

of imprudence for him to wander alone in this wild region."

"He isn't timid," answered Carlota, as bravely as she could.

But Teddy, sitting upon her lap, saw a tear escape and trickle down her cheek.

"Carlota! Bad Carlota! My muvver says nobody must cwy this day. I did tumble me down and stubbed me my toe an' I cwied. Then she told me that, about little boys going to find gold mines an' havin' Christmas candy—forever an' ever an' ever! So I stopped right off. Isn't it as naughty for girls to cwy as for boys?"

"Yes, yes. Worse, if girls are older."

It was a comfort to caress him and she reassured herself by the thought that both she and Carlos were used to wandering by themselves and in safety, also reflected that the herd of wild horses he had seen might have moved on and so led him out of his way. Then she said aloud, as much to herself as to Teddy:

"Brother knew that we were to go to that Pass yonder, where the pointed rocks are and, likely, he'll meet us there."

It was Mr. Burnham's purpose to push his

way through this Pass to the heart of the mountainous land beyond, where lay the rich tracts of which he had heard but which, because of attending difficulties, had never been properly "prospected."

So Carlota slipped the treat of jam-spread cake into the botany box slung across her shoulders, adding to it the slices of bread and cheese she could not then enjoy, and explaining:

"Maybe I'll be hungrier, by and by, Mrs. Burnham, so I'll put this aside in my 'box-of-all-work,' as my father calls it."

By this time all the self-glory of Dennis Fogarty had been dried up by the tear upon the cheek of his beloved "little lady." He, as well as Teddy, had seen that, and at the sight he forgot everything save her unhappiness.

"Sure, 'tis past time for that brother o' hers to be showin' himself. I thought, says I, maybe they'd had a little scrap an' he'd soon come along to patch up the breach. But no, says he. When he's mad he stays mad, says he—if mad it is! I'll have a word with her the now an' see if aught is I can do to cheer her belike."

With that he pulled from his pocket a brilliant cotton handkerchief, fresh from the pack of a peddler upon a passing train. He had purchased it on a day soon after this pilgrimage was decided and when his ambition to become a Mexican horseman was yet young. The handkerchief represented a Spanish bull fight and, in its general effect, was red enough to have served as "flag" in its own combat. At some opportune moment, Dennis had intended to produce it with dazzling flourish, for the amazement of his companions. He now resolved upon a kindlier use. Unobserved by Carlota, he begged of Mrs. Burnham a half-loaf of bread and the greater luxury of a tiny pat of butter. Scooping a hole in the crust of the loaf he bestowed within it the butter, replaced the crust he had removed, and carefully wrapped the whole in the gaudy napkin. Then he thrust the parcel into the breast of his jacket and rejoined Carlota. The absent lad might now appear at any moment and his enevitable hunger was thus provided against.

"I s'pose there's never a know ye know where he'll pop out of, since there's no spot in sight would hide Hop-o'-my-thumb, barrin'

a well grown lad like your own. But sure, Miss Carlota, 'tis time he was shimmerin' back. He's that light o' foot as I never saw an' 'tis pinin' I be for a sight of his own merry face."

Now wily Dennis knew that the way to force her confidence was to give her a bit of a heart-ache; and he, like the Burnhams, felt that the time for secrecy was past. She looked up into his face and at sight of its sympathy her courage gave way.

"Oh, Dennis! What do you suppose has happened to him?"

"I could tell that better if I knew what he went for to do."

With a last rally of her bravery, she replied:

"Prob'ly, he knows best and will come when he chooses. I hear the rumble of another train. I like, now, to feel the jar along the earth so long before they get in sight. I expect that's a heavy freight."

"Hear to her! Do ye mind, Miss Carlota, how scared ye was at a bit of a hand-car, that first night ye come? Blessed be the day! An' as wise now about freights an' sleepers an'

'overlands' as the best. But look your fill at this one 's on the road now. Soon we'll be beyant all such matters, if things go as they should."

The girl had not listened to all the wordy fellow's talk, but she had caught that statement about leaving the line of railway, and asked:

"Are they going to do that right away, Dennis?"

"So the misthress was sayin', forby."

"Then—I cannot go with them. I must either wait here for Carlos or try to find him. Dennis, Dennis! Some harm has happened my brother. I feel it, I know it!"

"Arra musha! What nonsense is this? Unless, belike, he was after some mischief or other," returned the trackman, with an outward show of scorn and an inward conviction that her judgment was right.

"No. Oh! no, no, no. He was in no mischief. He? My brother couldn't do anything —anything—wrong. No, Dennis Fogarty. Maybe he was silly to go but he'll come back. The dear Lord won't let any harm happen him, I know. And yet, I cannot go away to that

Pass in the mountains without him. I—did you say this burro was mine? Really and truly my own?"

"Truth, did I. To have an' to hold—if ye can—forever. But why's that, me small Sainyereety?" quoth the Irishman, priding himself upon his fine Spanish accent.

"If I go a little way toward the north to look for my brother will you go with me, Dennis dear?" she coaxed.

Happy Dennis! He struck his breast with an air and—hit the bundle he had hidden there, and the trivial incident altered his gravity to mirth. A second before, infected by her fear he had been certain that Carlos had been killed in some accident; now his opinion was wholly changed.

"Sure, it's go with ye I will. An' 'tis aye safe an' sound we'll find him the now. But hungry? Of course. Else why? See?" He showed her the parcel of bread and they both laughed aloud.

"Good Dennis! Kind Dennis! My father will thank you, oh! so much! when he comes home for—for all your niceness to his children. So, let's tell the others that we are go-

ing and go right away. Come, let's. Quick."

Since she would not, therefore, go unattended and because he did not see how it was possible for her, also, to get lost if she kept her attention fixed upon that meeting point at the Pass, Mr. Burnham consented to a temporary division of their little party, warning:

"But be certain to ride back to us before the night comes on, Carlota."

Mrs. Burnham added:

"And, Dennis, if you let harm happen so much as a hair of her sunny head I shall know you are something less than a man."

So, delighted to have done with suspense and to be upon the road toward her absent one, the child gayly waved her hand and rode away. Dennis, too, again placed his hand upon his breast—and the loaf—in a supposed "Greaser" style, and goaded the noble Cork to follow whither the humble Connemara led.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SNARER SNARED

Although, as far as the eye could reach, the plateau appeared one unbroken level it was crossed, midway, by an unwooded valley; and, as he gained upon it, the herd of mustangs which Carlos had seen feeding upon the hither side of this hidden valley suddenly disappeared from his view.

He ran lightly forward toward this vanishing point of his coveted possession, thinking:

"That's queer! They, certainly, were horses and no mirage—such as we saw on that other plain. That was strange, too; the things we saw in the sky-picture were just what we have since come to know so well; railroad, cars, station, water-tank and all! In the mirage everything was upside down, but the horses I saw just now were walking on four feet, their backs right side up, and quietly feeding. Well, if I keep on I'll surely find

them. And how I'll astonish Jack when I ride back on a creature so much finer than his old worn-outs! I'll choose the very handsomest of the band and, if I have half-luck, I'll catch it —thus!"

He whirled his lasso around his head, flung it, and deftly cleft the cactus spike toward which he had aimed.

"Well done, Carlos! Excellent! Ha! I'm proud of my father's son this day. I didn't know I had learned so well. If Miguel were here he'd push out his lips and say: 'Ah! it might be worse!' Poor old Miguel! and Dennis so jealous of him."

Tossing the cactus aside he rewound his lariat for fresh efforts. At that moment, a wild turkey flew over his head; so low that it was almost within reach and so slowly that he knew it had been wounded in some manner.

"It's not manly sport to catch a hurt creature yet—a bird on the wing, even a broken one —I'll try. I'm glad Carlota isn't here for she'd call me cruel. She's a darling little sister but, sometimes, she does make a big fuss about—nothing at all."

Watching his chance, he flung the riata up

ward and caught the wounded thing. It fell at his feet, dying, and a curious chill crept through the lad's veins.

"That's because of silly old Marta. I've listened to her omens till I always remember them, and *that's* ignorance, my father says. Yet, 'Who snares the wounded shall himself be snared.' Pooh! I've put it out of misery, anyway. Ha! There's a road-runner! It's not hurt and how, if besides my horse, I take back fresh game for our suppers? Then, indeed, will that boy think that 'poor Carlos,' who must trudge afoot while his neighbor rides, is of some account in camp."

Again he flung his slender cord and this time he failed. But nothing discouraged, he wound it afresh, to be ready for more serious business and believing that the horses must be very near.

They were; much nearer than he thought; for as he turned toward the west, he saw close before him the beginning of that hidden, treeless, valley into which they had retreated.

His approach had been unnoticed. The herd had found a "tank," or one of the large, hollow rocks filled with water, with which nature

supplies her children's need in that land of few streams. The animals were drinking deeply, eagerly, and his selection could be carefully made. After it had been, Carlos thought, that he, also, would quench his thirst at the "tank" but—business first!

Deciding which was the very finest one of all the band, he took careful, deliberate aim, shot the *riata,* and caught the unsuspecting beast by one of its forelegs.

Then there was consternation in the herd but, careless of other endangering hoofs or aught but his capture, the well-trained lad rushed forward headlong and closed with his captive. This was no new task for him. He had been taught the trick of "catching and throwing" by more than one employee, or passing sojourner, at Refugio, while his steel-like young muscles well endured the strain now put upon them. He had been an apt pupil and it was Miguel's boast that the lad could beat his instructors at their own business. Yet the contest which ensued between the wild mustang and the excited boy was long and severe. There was will on each side but the human will was aided by watchful intelligence; and

when the young horse-breaker had gained a seat upon his captive's back he was satisfied, though some would have fancied the battle but just begun.

"Fight—caper—rear—buck—kick—do your worst! Have a care! Now, quiet—quiet, there, and—steady!"

He got his fingers to the animal's nostrils and his lips to its ear, and what magic influence there was thus exerted only those wise in horse-lore can explain. The result was amazing. The mustang quivered in fear, tried once more, and futilely, to throw the boy from its back, then stood stock-still. Then Carlos relaxed his own muscles and suddenly was impelled to look up.

As silently as he had stolen upon the unconscious herd in the valley so silently he had himself been surrounded. Indians to right of him —Indians to the left of him—Indians everywhere!

Odd! But his first thought was that silly adage of old Marta:

"Who snares the wounded shall himself be snared."

Then he rallied. He was as brave as most

lads, braver than many. He had done some wonderful deeds of skill, that day, and his veins still thrilled with pride in his own achievements. Of Indians in general he was not afraid; and he saw, at once, that these did not wear the dress of the hostile Apaches. Yet their faces were stern and uncompromising as, in silence, the eldest of the company advanced and laid his hand on the youngster's shoulder.

This old man nodded toward another brave, who seemed to give assent, and in that same terrifying silence the others grouped themselves about their chief. He signaled a youth, who promptly passed to Carlos's side, where he still sat upon the subdued mustang and, with the pretty lariat which had done such clever work that day, bound its owner's arms behind his back.

Poor Carlos! This indignity, to be tied like a criminal and with his own rope, was so bitter that anger rose and banished fear. He tossed his head defiantly, squared his shoulders, and gazed unflinchingly down the shallow valley along which he must ride to his fate.

Those who followed glanced admiringly at his superb little figure, riding proud and un-

supported, and many nods of satisfaction were exchanged among them. Such a small brave would be a worthy addition to their tribe.

After a time, the valley turned sharply toward the northwestern mountains, and the prisoner fixed his gaze upon them, sadly thinking:

"How little did I dream of entering them like this! Poor, poor Carlota! Her heart will break."

Stop! He must not think of Carlota. He must think of nothing that would unman him. If he must die there, in the wilderness, it should be as became his father's son!

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE DARKNESS

But Carlos was not to die.

The Indians, into whose hands he had fallen, were of the most peaceable tribe left in the wide west—Zunis, of the Pueblos; and it was toward one of their villages, or pueblos—from which they take their race name—that they now conducted him. They had recently been greatly harassed by some of their lawless neighbors and intended to make an example of their captive, though without personal injury.

As they advanced on their journey Carlos noticed in surprise that there were fine fields of corn and well cultivated vineyards along the banks of a stream and felt that they must be nearing some great rancho. He had heard his father describe the curious villages of the Pueblos and hoped that it was to such a place that he was being taken; for, even in this strait, his curiosity was great and he was eager to see

new things. Moreover, the ride continued so long that his spirits rose as he reflected:

"Evidently, they aren't going to kill me yet awhile."

Then he stole a glance into the face of the brave walking nearest him and observed that while it was as stern as ever it was not at all "blood thirsty." This increased both his courage and his interest.

"What a tale I shall have to tell—if I live to tell it! I believe I shall. I'm sure these must be some of the 'good Indians' which the Captain said were all dead. They look almost less Indian than Mexican, though they are very tall and straight. That old fellow in front is splendid. I wish, oh! how I do wish, I had learned to talk Pueblo when Carlota did and my father warned me, indeed, coaxed me. He said that, living as we did, among so many different people, we should study the language of each. That I would find then the 'knowledge' that's 'power.' It would be 'power,' indeed, if I were able to ask these people if they know what they are doing and to whom they are doing it!"

At this point he cast a haughty look about him and gave his comely head a higher toss.

What? What was that? Did he detect something like a grim smile on the lips of that young fellow at the left?

If so, the smile was too fleeting to have been real. The man was merely adjusting the folds of his blanket, and it might have been a shadow of these which nettled Carlos.

Nettled he was; and, although he knew he would not be understood, he angrily demanded:

"Who are you? What are you going to do with me?"

At sound of his voice the leader of the party turned half about, as if to answer, but checked the seeming impulse; and, in the same stolid silence, the party pressed forward among the scattered shrubs and trees which now marked their path.

Gradually, the trees increased in size and number. There were other and wider streams, at one of which a man stooped and filled a gourd that hung at his waist. He offered this to Carlos, holding it to the lad's parched lips with a kindliness of gesture that, surely, betokened no malice.

Carlos would have pushed the gourd away, but nature was too strong for this; so, setting

his lips to the rim, he drained the cup to the bottom.

"Oh! how delicious that was! Thank you!" said he gratefully.

The gourd was refilled and emptied a second time; then the Indian himself drank. So did several others of the party which numbered, as the prisoner judged without seeing those behind him, a dozen or more men.

Onward again; the long unbroken strides of the redskins equalling the restless pace of the led mustang upon which the captive rode. He was about to ask if he, also, might get down and walk; hoping to make them understand his gestures if not his words, when a sudden turn of the mountain spur disclosed the picture he had longed to see. Before him, on a terrace-like hill, lay a cluster of adobe huts, or, as it rather seemed, one wide-spreading habitation which might shelter many people.

If his captors did not understand his speech, at least, they did his smile of satisfaction, as he cried:

"A Pueblo village! Then I am safe!"

He eagerly studied it as it lay, gradually rising upon the slope, its succession of roofs

appearing like some gigantic stairway. Upon the roofs some women were sitting, weaving. He noticed the ladder-like arrangement, leading from the ground to the top, by which the buildings could be entered; though there were, also, openings here and there upon the level of the foundation. His observation was terminated by somebody's lifting him from his horse and tieing his own sash over his eyes.

"You shall not! You—shall—not! If I am to die—I'll die with my eyes wide open!" he screamed, excitedly. For now his fear had returned and he as confidently expected death as he had life, but a moment before.

There followed some talk among those who had been most active in his capture, and then he was again lifted and borne onward, upward, as it seemed, though he could neither see nor help himself save by his shrieks which, however, availed him nothing. Thus, struggling and protesting, he was carried whither his captors chose; and, after what seemed an hour but was only a few minutes, he was unceremoniously dumped upon an earthen floor.

Leaping to his feet he peered around him. He seemed to be alone and he was in darkness.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

When they left Tuttle for the mountains, the young Manuels had obtained permission to resume their own costumes. They had found the skirts and fitted bodice for Carlota, and the bagging overalls for Carlos, most annoying, and once more arrayed in their familiar garments they "felt like themselves." Dennis, almost enviously, admired the simplicity of Carlota's clothing and was proud to attend a maiden so picturesquely attired.

"Faith, me little lady, ye might be one o' them Injun chiefseses' daughters herself, so ye might! An', if we meet up with any, they'll go easy like, forby they'd be botherin' their own kin."

"I guess they'd soon find out the difference. My hair is yellow and an Indian's is always dark. Dennis, did you know I could talk a little of their language?"

"Sure, an' I didn't but I believe it entire. Me purty dear, you're that clever—"

"That's not 'clever.' Clever means to be very wise, like my father. But learning to talk different ways, why, that's just fun. I used to show our visiting Indians something and they would tell me the name of it; then they would ask me for it, in real earnest, maybe, and I would soon know what they meant. Dennis, if I live to be a woman I mean to know about every language there is in the whole world, and about every single flower, too. Or if—not every—then as many as I can. I do, really."

He regarded her with all-believing eyes, yet there crept a touch of commiseration into his honest face.

"Hear to the purty girleen! But 'tis a fine headache you'll be havin' all your life, Miss Carlota. Och! You will that."

"Knowing things doesn't make your head ache, Dennis Fogarty. How can you think so?"

"Oh! I know, I know. Once, Miss Carlota, away back in Connemara, I was sent to the priest to be taught. Arrah musha, the day!" He bitterly groaned, remembering it.

"Well, what of it? Come on, please. Don't let your Cork drag along so or we shall never be there. That's better. I don't mean to hurry you, but I'm so glad to be moving, and I do think the broncho travels more and more slowly all the time. I'm afraid that when you conquered him you took all the heart out of him. But, what about you and the priest?"

"Sure, it was mighty little. 'Twas only one day betwixt us. I goes in the morning, goes I, along with more little gossoons; an' there sits his riverence, all easy like, in his chair. So we pays him our duty as we should, ye understand, an' he stands us all up in a row. Then he whips out a card with them things they call letters printed out on't, big an' bold. I was the top o' the row; an': 'Dennis Fogarty,' says he, 'what's that thing?' says he.

" 'Faith, Father,' says I, ' 'tis nought but a couple o' black streaks with another streak crossin' them same.' ' 'Tis *A!*' says the father, says he. But—"

The narrator paused, groaned, and moved uneasily, as if the memory were painful. Or —was it the saddle?

"Well, and what then? What next? Dennis,

when my Miguel is telling a story he never stops right in the most interesting part. Never.''

''Yes, me dear. I know, I know. But, little lady, that there 'Greaser' never went to school in Connemara!''

''You did! But you'll never get away from that school nor tell me what you learned at it, if you don't hurry. Now—what next?''

The ex-trackman scratched his head.

''Hmm. The next thing was a crack on me pate! an' that is the sum an' the substance of all me book learnin', avick!''

''Why, Dennis! Did you give up your education for such a trifle as that?''

'' 'Trifle,' says the little colleen! 'Twas no trifle, at all, at all, to get hit with the father's shillalah; an' the smart o' the blow—belike, I'm feelin' it yet!''

He rubbed his hard head with such a comical grimace that Carlota laughed aloud.

''Was that, really, all you ever studied?''

''All, says you? Sure, 'twas more nor enough. Home I went to me dad an' he topped off the crack of the priest's stick with a crack of his own, and set me to hoein' the praties.

Yes, I know, I know. Learnin' is nice for them that can't get on without it, but Dennis Fogarty's the boy as can. Och! This ridin' like a gentleman is a' most harder nor walkin' the track, so it be."

"How soon do you s'pose we'll find my brother?"

"Bother! But yourself is the one for questions!"

"It is you who are bothering, Dennis; for though I ask them I notice that you never answer."

"Well, then, I'll answer that one. We'll meet up with him by sundown!"

"That's a dear Dennis. That's quite as kind as Miguel and very like him. He always promises whatever I wish, whether he can keep his promise or not. I think I like that, anyway, it makes you feel so good inside. But, come on! I'll race Connemara against master Cork! Straight to the 'north!' The way our father went, the way my Carlos followed, and now—we. Go!"

The burro set off on a short-paced but steady trot and Dennis valiantly tried to keep up; but Cork would not be urged, cajoled, nor punished

into faster than a walking gait, which irritated Carlota and secretly gratified the ex-trackman.

Only those who, at their first trial, have continued horseback exercise for hours can understand his sufferings. But finally, the girl suspected the truth and modified the burro's pace. She even suggested that Dennis should walk.

"Would—Meegell?"

"Yes. If I told him to," she replied, convincingly.

The alacrity with which the Irishman dismounted was proof of his relief; also, that he would not be outdone in anything by the unknown Mexican.

Yet, walking seemed very slow, and though they tried to make the way merry by stories, and plans for the future when they should all —including Dennis Fogarty, Miner—be back at Refugio, they had not accomplished any great distance before the sudden twilight of the west came down upon them. Nor, apparently, were they any nearer meeting the lost lad than when they left the Burnham's wagon.

Both were wise concerning the perils of lonely night-travel in that region, so decided to turn aside into a little ravine which suggested

water and a camping place. It was even, by some miles, nearer the mountains they had hoped to reach, but they did not realize this then.

Making what haste they could to the spot they had chosen they found, as they had hoped, a spring of refreshing water, and dropping down beside it drew long breaths of delight. Then they plunged their hot faces into the little stream and drank deeply.

"Sure, that was better than bein' made President o' this fine counthry, it was!" exclaimed Dennis, but Carlota only sighed in content. Physical comfort influenced her mind, also, so that she said, after another moment of rest:

"Somehow, I don't feel so worried about Carlos, now. Do you?"

" 'Tis meself that never was."

"I thought you were."

"Acushla! Thinkin' an' bein' is two different matters, Miss Carlota. That fine brother o' yours is a nimble gossoon, so he be. If he slips into a scrape he'll easy slip out again. So, bein's we're here, we'd best take another sup o' that blessed water an' a bite to eat, and be off to the land o' dreams."

"I'll help you. I know how to saddle and unsaddle a horse as well as any *caballero* on the rancho. See—this quick way! Now, take a handful of grass and rub down your Cork, while I do the same for Connemara. Then we'll tether them where they can get a good supper and lie down to sleep."

"Not before you'd eat a bit, little lady!" protested the hungry man.

"Oh! I'm too tired to eat."

"Then so be I!" he asserted with a lengthening face.

"But you must. You need food."

"Yes, I know, I know. Howsumever, 'tis not the Fogarty 'll do that when his Miss Carlota goes supperless to bed," he plaintively answered.

"I—I was saving mine."

"And I."

"Dennis, for whom?"

"For that same as yourself. Sure."

"Oh! you're a dear, kind fellow!"

To the ex-trackman this seemed almost as much sustenance as would that loaf which he was so conscious of having inside his jacket—"So handy like to tempt a poor lad." Indeed,

they were both very hungry. Also, they were both perfectly healthy; therefore, their self-denial was short-lived.

"Dennis?" she called to him, in the dim light.

"Yes, me little lady."

"I think—we might take—just a little of—of the crust."

"I'm thinkin' that same."

"Besides, I have the jam-cake."

"Faith, an' what more could a runaway ask? More, by token, to-morrow's not come an' to each day falls its lot, says I."

With that he pulled forth his loaf and spread the gay kerchief on Carlota's lap.

"Do ye mind that, me dear? Sure, there's more nor a plenty for us an' him, too—when he comes."

Alas! it is the first step that counts. In this case, the first slice; Dennis cut that very thick and bountifully spread it with butter from the hidden store. This he gave to the girl, who ate it more rapidly and unthinkingly than she had ever eaten anything before. As she did so, all fatigue passed away and, perching herself upon a rock, she swung her feet in a satisfied

fashion that did the heart of Dennis Fogarty great good.

For once he did not wait till she had finished, and soon he, also, felt the comfort of food. That he did not swing his feet, as she did, was simply because he was sitting upon the ground and could not; but he began to sing in that funny monotone which he considered music and that was, at least, an outward expression of his inward content.

"Dennis, that was so good! If there'll be enough, I'd like just another little tiny bit."

The tender hearted fellow craftily hid the loaf behind him as he pretended to examine it, then cheerfully replied:

"Enough, says she? Faith, there's enough an' more nor plenty for a dozen like ye. An' butter—galore."

With that ferocious dirk of his, he slashed off another thick portion and gave it to her; but he did not take a second piece for himself, though his stomach lustily demanded the indulgence, and with heroic sacrifice he put the remnant of the bread as far behind him as he could reach.

Afterward, he pulled branches from the small

pines about the spring and piled them for Carlota's bed; over these he spread his own fine *serape* and, with a magnificent wave of his hand, motioned his "little lady" to take her needed rest.

"Thank you, good Dennis. I believe I was almost asleep, right here on the rock. It's a lovely bed, but first, I must say my prayers."

So the grizzled, labor-worn man and the innocent child knelt together and put themselves and their desires into the safe keeping of the loving Father who cared for them alike.

Five minutes later, they were both asleep, unconscious of danger or treachery; Dennis happily snoring and Carlota dreaming of Refugio and its beloved garden. Nor to either did it seem more than a moment before they were suddenly awakened, to find the sun already rising and a tall figure looming above them.

CHAPTER XXV

AN IRISH-INDIAN ONSLAUGHT

Carlota leaped to her feet and Dennis tried to rise, but a heavy foot was on his breast and a stern face bent over him, while an uplifted forefinger pointed dismay into his inmost soul.

"Me hour has come!" thought the unhappy fellow, but he made no further effort to move. The command of those unflinching eyes was not to be disobeyed. He wondered if the intruder's hand held the weapon with which he would be killed, but was almost too terrified to care. In his horror he felt himself already dying and his eyelids fluttered back into place as if for the last time.

"Oh! that is his salvation! If he will only keep them shut till it is over!" thought Carlota, watching.

After her sudden uprising she had not moved, and this fact was a relief to the stranger, so steadily regarding the prostrate Irish-

man. If she had screamed it would, probably, have brought the affair to a fatal and immediate climax. Thus a moment passed; another —more—an interminable time! The trio of human beings remained rigid, spellbound by as many varying emotions, while those terrible ten minutes which seemed an eternity dragged by. Then the foot was lifted from Dennis's chest and he was gruffly ordered to: "Get up."

At first, he was powerless to obey. Not until the sound of a sharp blow, followed by a grunt of satisfaction sent a thrill of new life through his palsied veins. Then he rose and saw the man who had menaced him standing a few feet away and pointing to the ground where he lay, crushed to lifelessness, a monstrous and most poisonous centipede.

"He died, not you," said the stranger, in broken English.

"Yes, Dennis! That dreadful thing was almost upon your throat. Oh! horrible," cried Carlota.

Dennis threw back his knotted hand to his neck and plucked away an imaginary reptile. He began to feel them crawling over him, everywhere. He had not sufficient composure left

in which to thank the stranger, who, however, expected nothing of the sort. He comforted the Irishman by saying:

"No more. Mate killed. Not plenty."

"Yes, dear Dennis, you're safe now, I'm sure. It seemed as if the dreadful creature would never, never finish his crawling over you. The whole width of your body and so slow! If you'd moved or disturbed him he would have thrust his deadly fangs into your flesh and you'd have died. I've heard about those things. It was the kind God kept you, dear old Dennis, and sent this good man just in time to save you."

Dennis was truly thankful and humble; yet he rubbed his confused head and wondered what need there had been of the peril if rescue were foreordained. However, such problems were too deep for his simple mind and he looked up in a manner to reveal the amusing perplexity he felt.

"Escapin' the serpent to fall into the Injun's hands! The fire an' the fryin'-pan, belike."

The rescuer was, indeed, an Indian, though he spoke fairly good English. But Carlota paid less heed to him than to the possibility of

her wandering brother having suffered the same fate which had just menaced Dennis and, it might be, herself also. Laying her hand upon the stranger's arm, she begged:

"Oh! tell me, please, have you seen a boy anywhere?"

The Irishman shivered in alarm at the girl's audacity, yet no harm ensued. The Indian merely looked at her and answered by one word: "Plenty."

"Where? Oh! please, please say where! Was it hereabouts? My brother, my twin—"

Then, indeed, did a curious smile show upon the redskin's face. He wheeled around and pointed up the mountain through a canyon that seemed a continuation of the ravine where they then stood. Whatever his ability, he made scant use of his English, for all he answered was: "Come."

Just then uprose a direful cry from the Fogarty:

"Ochone! Me bread! Me horse! The thievin' creatur'! I'll break every bone in his carcass, I will that!"

Even the dignified Indian was interested. There was Dennis again at war with his teth-

ered broncho, who was nonchalantly nibbling the last of the priceless loaf—their own breakfast.

"Dennis! Dennis! Are you going to fight him every day, as you did Mr. Grady? Stop—I'm ashamed of you."

"Stop, is it? An' the breakfast clean gone?"

"But that is your fault, not his. You shouldn't have left it where he could get it. Besides, who knows but it is all dirty and—and centipede-y?"

The Indian waited until there was a lull in affairs, then quietly untied the broncho, motioned that Carlota should mount her burro—still unsaddled, and taking the leading straps of both animals, strode up the canyon at a rapid pace. By a gesture he indicated that Dennis was to bring the saddles, blankets, and other belongings of the pair; and so intimidated was Mr. Fogarty that he dared not disobey.

Carlota rode as silent as her guide. She guessed that he was taking her to some settlement and she saw that he was such as had fre-

quented Refugio, and from whom she had never received other than kind treatment. She was consumed by anxiety concerning Carlos but, from her father's talks and her own slight experience, she knew sufficient of Indian character to understand that this silence would best serve her purpose. She had asked for information and the stranger had answered, "Come."

So because of her faith that she was being swiftly led to her brother, her heart grew light and she began to sing; and hearing the song floating down to him through the gulch, poor Dennis made a virtue of necessity and loaded himself worse than any pack mule. Then he started forward whither the others had now disappeared.

It was a brief but anxious pilgrimage. At every step he fancied a creeping, stinging reptile beneath his feet, though he reckoned upon the protection which his mighty boots were to him. On either shoulder he bore a saddle which continually grew heavier, as is the habit of burdens carried. The blanket and *serape* airily floated anywhere it happened, underfoot

or overhead, at the caprice of the wind; and the tin box of his "little lady" played a jingling accompaniment to the whole.

"Faith! 'tis well I'd all that fine practice, hod-carryin' to them tall buildin's in Chicago, before I took up with railroadin', now isn't it, Mr. Fogarty?" he ejaculated, as he neared his journey's end.

A moment later, as he came in sight of the pueblo and a group of its inhabitants assembled before it, he complacently added:

"An' sure's me name's Dennis, they're all waitin' to receive me!"

As he approached the spot a shout was raised, and his elation vanished. Believing it to be a "war cry," the vicissitudes of the morning ended in collapse. He caught a glimpse of Carlota being lifted from her burro and led away between two squaws. It seemed to him that these forced her up a steep ladder, then threw her downward into some invisible depth. Heaped with his own burdens, the Irishman sank to the ground. An ague of fear shook him, his face paled, and a cold sweat came out upon his temples. Cowering thus in terror, he saw the assembled Indians swoop

down upon him from the terrace. Then, as do those in mortal extremity, he began to see visions and dream dreams, and fancy suddenly brought before him the face, as he had imagined it, of Miguel, the Hated! In similar circumstance, what would this much-envied "Greaser" have done?

The thought of the Spaniard acted like a tonic. With a yell as wild as an Indian's own, Dennis now arose, while the encumbering blankets and saddles fell unheeded about him. Thrusting his hand into his belt he unsheathed his dangerous dirk, crying:

"Carlota! Me own little lady! Have no fear! 'Tis comin' I am—so 'ware to ye, ye bloodthirsty, murderin' Injuns! Leave her go —leave!"

Mad with his own prowess he blindly rushed forward, his shining blade catching the rays of the sun and fiercely heralding his advance.

But, hark! His enemies were upon him! He made one tremendous lunge with his terrible knife, and Mr. Fogarty knew no more.

CHAPTER XXVI

CONFLICTING EMOTIONS

"Dennis! Dennis! Please open your eyes. O, Dennis! How could you be so foolish?"

"Eh? What? Hey? An' be I still—alive?"

"It's not by your own merit that you are. But, since you've only broken your arm and cracked your head, I'm thankful to scold you, Dennis. Silly, silly fellow!"

The ex-trackman and amateur desperado raised his sound arm and carefully examined his head. It ached badly, yet it seemed intact.

"Skull, is it? An' where is the break in it?"

"Of course, I don't mean that, exactly. You bumped it pretty hard. What were you meaning to do, Dennis?"

He tried to rise but failed. Then he looked about him and realized that he was lying on a straw pallet, upon one of those curious roofs he had seen rising before him, when he engaged

in the late combat. He reproachfully regarded Carlota, who sat comfortably curled up, her face bright, her hair freshly brushed, and her whole attitude one of entire complacency. Yet, as he made a second effort to rise and turned giddy, her expression changed to one of pity.

"There, poor dear, lie still. I'll tell you all about it. Oh! Dennis, we've found friends! Wait. I forgot that the chief's wife said you were to drink this as soon as you awoke."

She lifted his head upon her arm and held an earthen bowl to his lips and he drank from it, eagerly. He was both faint and thirsty and the warm liquid was very grateful to him. It was a broth of meat which he, at once, termed "victuals an' drink."

"There, that is good. The others say that she is a fine 'medicine woman' and it should give you strength."

All this was very astonishing to the injured man whose chief interest, however, concerned himself.

"What happened to me, Miss Carlota?"

"Why—I guess you tried to kill somebody —and he objected. The young men who were

going to their daily tasks were gathered on the terrace, singing—''

'' 'Singin',' says she!''

''Surely. It's the custom in this pueblo. So the woman told me. It's their 'labor song,' before they go down into the fields to work. A hymn to the Great Spirit, praising him and asking his blessing on the day. I think it's a lovely ceremony and when we get home to Refugio, I shall ask my father to have our men do just that way. Only, I'm afraid some of them won't wish it. They aren't very revi—reverentiational. That isn't the right word, Dennis, but it means doing honor to God. But, oh, Dennis! I am so happy!''

This amazing statement aroused the wounded man's curiosity and so aided his recovery.

''I—maybe I can sit up now. I'm dead, entirely, but—I'll try.''

''You're better, Dennis Fogarty. And if you're alive how can you be dead?''

''Yes, I know, I know. But if Injuns can sing hymns—Faith! It must be in some better world nor any I've seen. So we must

all be together in another. Injuns! Arrah musha! The beasts!"

"You are not in another world, you are still in the same dear old one where you've always been. You're a darling fellow, but you're almost as silly as 'The Dancer.' Now you must listen. First: this is a Pueblo village. It belongs to a very peaceful tribe. My brother is here; Carlos, my own brother, and he is safe, too. Can you understand?"

"Sure, Miss Carlota, have I no wits entirely? If he's here, why isn't he here? Tell me that, if ye please."

She laughed, then answered rather soberly:

"Why, it's the oddest thing! They've 'arrested' him!"

"They've what? 'Deed, it's muddled I am."

"It's like what my father told about people who did wrong in the big towns and cities. Other people take the wrong-doing people and put them in a prison. Well, they have put my Carlos, my own sweetest, innocentest brother, in a sort of prison here. The woman told me and that I should see him very soon. They're

going to have his 'trial' this morning and you must get well right off. Think of it! Can't you hurry up? But, of course, soon as he tells them it will be all right. He has done nothing he should be punished for.''

Dennis drew himself up and bolstered his back against an angle of the next roof. The sun was getting high and the shadow he thus obtained soothed his still aching head. But Carlota was native to that land and unclouded sunshine never disturbed her. It merely set her golden hair a-glitter while she unblinkingly studied the details of this mud-built pueblo. In the adoring gaze of the Irishman she seemed herself to radiate sunshine and he winked fast, as if the vision blinded him; or to hide a tell-tale tear, forced from him by weakness and dismay. But she saw the betraying drop and taxed him with it:

''Crying? You, Dennis? When you should be so thankful? Or does your arm pain you? Of course it must, yet wasn't it a good way the oldest 'medicine man' fixed it? Adobe mud, or something, outside the sticks, which are not to be touched, he says, for 'a moon and a moon.' That's their queer kind of clock. By then it

will be better than the other arm, which you might break to match, if you like!"

She leaned back, laughing at her own conceit, and, since he had the happy faculty of making fun at his own expense, he joined in her mirth. Yet he felt that their situation was graver than she realized, and begged:

"Begin at the very start o' the matter, if ye please, Miss Carlota, an' tell it me body an' bones, from when ye rode off with the Injun an' left me to carry the truck."

"That wasn't my fault, poor Dennis. I'd have stayed to help you if I could but even I was a little afraid—then. I'm not now. I'm so happy because Carlos is here. He is well. No centipede stung him, and nothing hurt him. We'll see him soon and we'll tell them that—But I'm getting to be as great a talker as you, Dennis, dear. Do you wish another drink?"

He nodded, and now was fully able to hold the bowl for himself with his uninjured arm.

"We rode from you clear to the pueblo without a word said, though I saw the man often look at my clothes. Then up to my hair, and down to the ground. All the time I was longing to ask—"

"Sure, 'twas hard for ye not!"

"But as soon as we came here we saw women, squaws, at work. They were getting breakfast, broiling meat upon coals and baking little cakes of meal. They, too, looked at me as if I were—they didn't know what! Their clothes are more like Marta's and Anita's than mine are. Much prettier things than the old blue ones Mrs. Burnham gave me."

"Did they give ye a bit o' their breakfast, Miss Carlota?"

"Afterward. Plenty of it and it was nice. But, don't interrupt, please, or I'll never get through. As soon as the man who brought us had spoken to them in their own language—which they didn't know that I knew, too, a little—they came and took my hands. They smiled at me and yet I thought they looked sorry. One of them touched my tunic and said something which means 'pretty.' So, I told her all about it. Then they led me up to one of these queer roofs and down into the house. It is very cosy and comfortable. There is a sort of fireplace, though I think they do their cooking out of doors when it's as pleasant as now. One of them washed my face, just as if

I'd been a baby, or Teddy; and they brushed my hair with a curious comb that pulled it dreadfully."

"Bad cess to the meddlesome creatur's!"

"Oh! no. It was all in kindness; and just as I was hoping for my breakfast, there were you, outside the walls, making such trouble for us both! Dennis, why did you run at the men with your knife?"

"Arrah musha! 'Twas themselves came runnin' to me, first hand; yellin' like wildcats, as they be!"

"Nonsense. That was the song, the hymn, as I told you. It wasn't music I liked very well, though it sounded a good deal like the way you sing, Dennis, dear," she commented, frankly. "They saw you carrying the saddles and things and, from the man who brought us, they'd heard about the centipede. They meant to bid you only a decent welcome, yet you rushed at them as if you would murder them. You would, too, if one of them hadn't caught your arm just in time. He hurried to stop you and snatched away your dirk, but that threw you to the ground and your head struck a stone. The women said that your arm was

doubled under you and they thought you were killed."

"Hmm. I know; I know. Bad cess to me for an ill-thriven idjut!"

"No. I understand. You thought, as the Captain did, that there could be but one kind of Indian. Yet you should have known better, after that good one saved your life from the centipede. That's all. Your arm has been fixed and you've been fed; and as soon as they have had that—that 'trial'—of Carlos, we'll go on again and try to find the Burnhams. I wish they'd hurry it up!"

"Wisha, for what are they 'tryin' ' him?"

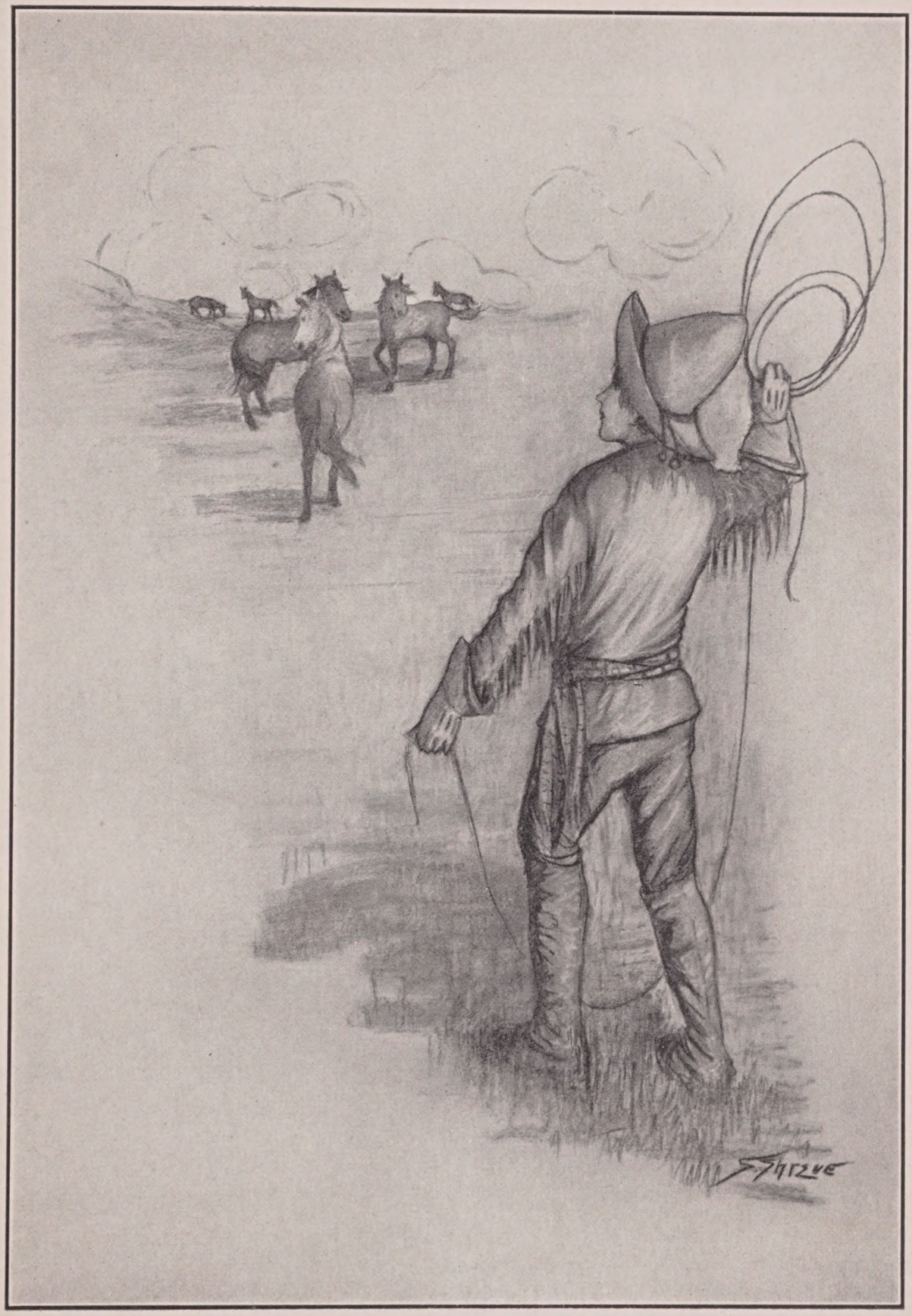
"For—taking a horse. Just a horse."

"Wh-e-ew!" said Dennis and said no more. He had lived in that region long enough to know that horse stealing is the unforgivable crime, against white man or red; and, indeed, this made the affair a most serious one.

Carlota was frightened by his manner and quickly demanded:

"Why do you say 'Whew!' in that tone of voice, Mr. Dennis Fogarty? It isn't at all a nice word and it isn't nice in you to use it."

"Sure, I'm uneasy, Miss Carlota. A horse



"HE OFTEN CAUGHT A WILD HORSE"

is a horse an' there's no denyin' that same."

"Dennis, that fall has made you silly."

"Very like that's the truth you be speakin'. But, for why did he go steal a horse?"

"He never! How can a body 'steal' what belongs to nobody else? At home he often caught a wild horse out of a herd and broke it to ride. He's very—very expertatious that way, Dennis. My Miguel was terr'ble proud of him.'

Then, after a moment, she continued:

"I don't see what made you disturb me when I was so happy. I wish somebody—But I won't wait to wish. I'll go straight away and find out what it all means. I *will* see my brother. I *will* make them bring him out from wherever he is, for he can't talk with these people and I can. Oh! how glad I am I learned, even if only a little bit!"

She hastily left him to his lonely foreboding, there upon the roof, which grew unpleasantly warm as the shadows moved from him. Scrambling down into the interior of the house upon which they had been sitting, Carlota wildly demanded of the first person she met to be taken to her brother.

"I must and shall see him. Where is he?"

"Where you will be if you make an uproar. The council is deliberating."

That the girl would dare force her presence upon the elders of the village did not enter the informant's mind till she saw Carlota look frantically around and then dart toward the nearest opening in the inner wall. This was not in the direction of the hall of justice, but it led—somewhere! and through it the child ran, crying at the top of her voice:

"Carlos! My Carlos! Where are you?"

Then she was confronted by an aged woman, who caught and almost viciously questioned her:

"Would you rush before the wise men thus —you?"

"Wise? You mean wicked—wicked! Oh, my father, my father! Why did we ever leave Refugio!" and shrieking, she threw herself prone on the floor and buried her face in her arms.

CHAPTER XXVII

BY DIFFERENT TONGUES

"Refugio."

The word was magic. The angry woman who had laid hand upon Carlota's shoulder started at the sound and intently regarded the unhappy child. Then she stooped and again touched her, but, this time, with gentle, tremulous fingers.

"Say that again, *Señorita.* Again."

The girl sprang up, for to hear the familiar Spanish was, also, magic.

"What? Who are you? It was Refugio, I said. The House of Refuge—which this is not! Why—why?"

The wrinkled face softened to comeliness, and a look grew upon it which tempted Carlota to clasp it between her own two palms, in a dainty fashion she had, and to beseech:

"Do you know Refugio? Have you ever been at my home?"

"Are you the Master's daughter?"

"Yes, oh! yes. Do you know him? Is he, too, here?"

The woman shook her head.

"No. Why should he be here? But I know the place, yes. In my heart of hearts, why not? And the blessed Lady who died for my poor son. Pablo, soul of my life, afflicted of God, Pablo—the natural, where are you this day!"

"'Pablo'? The 'Lady of Refugio'? Then —who are you?"

Carlota was now upon her knees before the trembling creature whose memory had been so strangely stirred. But, at sight of her thus humbled, the crone herself stood up and set the child upon a bench. Still standing, she burst into a rapid story of that which has been already told: of Pablo's desperate illness and his nursing back to health by the all-loving "Lady of Refugio." How that name, that household, was a spell to conjure by; and that here—if she who had long ago married a Pueblo had influence—the children of Refugio should have rich and speedy justice. More: there could be nothing too good or sacred in the whole tribe for them.

"Come, little girl. Let us go. Ah! proud, proud am I thus once to lay my hand upon the flesh of her who died to save my son!"

"Is Pablo here?"

"Not now. Sometimes he comes, far, far between. He is not like others. Against my father's will I married and I have been punished, yes. Against his will and against the faith I had been taught by the good Padres. I was happy, why not? Till my husband, a brave, fell dead in the field, gored by one of his own cattle. My son is happier than I, for he knows neither sin nor its punishment. But, come. I can still be of use. Come."

The councilors were amazed by the intrusion of old Paula and her charge, but listened respectfully to her story and her plea. She was reputed to be very wise and was known to be a most excellent nurse. True, those hardy Pueblos rarely required nursing, yet, when they did, it were well to be friends with her who ministered to them. The dose might be wrong if the giver were offended.

When she ceased speaking Carlos was immediately brought out of his dark room and set in the midst; and to see the twins rush, sobbing,

yet laughing, into each other's arms touched even those stolid Indians and inclined some to lenient judgment.

Yet, it was the eldest man speaking, and he must be heard:

"Brothers, he stole our horse. From our own wild herd. We have been greatly harassed. Punishment is just. If we make not example of the bird in the hand, how deal with the bird uncaught? There is peace between us and our white brothers but—our white brothers still steal our horses. This youth is swift of aim; he is proud; a Pueblo of whom to say: 'Behold, a brave!' His father—" a suggestive shrug of the shoulders intimated that this unknown father was recreant and had deserted his offspring. "Let him be to us a son and she our daughter. This is my wisdom."

Then the council gravely laid the matter before the youthful prisoner and listened closely to his simple reply, which, acting as interpreters, old Paula and Carlota eagerly translated.

"On my father's rancho are many herds of horses. All are wild. I did not ask to whom they belonged. When I wished I sought one,

as I did from yours. I have been taught the art. I am not a thief. I, I would not have 'stolen,' no. Not if I walked all the days of my life. But I thought the free creatures of the plains were God's, alone. Well, then; if I did wrong I will take punishment, as should the son of man who is brave. After you have done your will I will go. Nothing can make me stay. My father has not forever left his children. Since he comes not it is because, for some reason I do not know, that he cannot. My sister and I will go to him, and tell him this story. He will restore what is due. I owe nothing to anyone except good will, and that I will pay as I may. Moreover—*you still have the horse—and I broke him for you.*"

The naive conclusion of the argument was so consistent with the childish pleader that some of those stern judges smiled. After all, he was but a boy and he spoke the truth; and the old chief who would have liked to rear the youngster as his own was even more desirous now. But he was just, and it was he who first extended the hand-clasp of peace.

Radiant with joy at their dismissal, the twins left the hall of justice and returned where they

had left Dennis. He had vanished, yet, while they were searching the many roofs they heard his voice in one of the courtyards below.

"Hark! The foolish fellow! He imagines that hallooing so loud will make them understand him as well as if he knew their language!" said Carlota, with a little air of superiority. Indeed! Where would they have been now if she hadn't been able to talk with old Paula?

"Ha, Carlota! I'm learning some lessons, too, of another sort—these days. I'll lasso no more horses till I know whose they are! But, come on! It's so good to be free again and Dennis is surely getting into trouble. Why, what's the matter with his arm?"

As they descended to the court and the Irishman, Carlota explained. He was now trying to "swop" with a young Indian; his broncho for a pack-burro.

"Hurry! Tell them, sister! He'll make them mad, directly, and—I don't wish any more Pueblo anger, if you please! It wasn't of the noisy kind but—I'll be glad when we're once more on the road toward our father, and I wish we hadn't to go back to the Burnhams.

While I was alone in that horrible darkness, I did a lot of thinking, and I believe that father went to the big city of New York, where the 'enemies' came from, on some business for the rich men who own the mountains he 'prospected.' Anyway, I think that's where we'd best seek him."

"Isn't that a far, far place? Is it in the 'north'?"

"Yes. But we can go and go, day after day, can't we?"

"I—I s'pose so," she slowly answered.

But this "wild goose chase" was losing its charm for Carlota, and she now often thought of the Captain's opinion that they should never have left home, unless bidden to do so by a wiser man than Miguel.

However, here was Dennis, forgetting his trading operations in delight at reunion with Carlos; and here, too, was unusual commotion among the villagers. Because Paula would insist that this should a *fiesta,* a day of merry frivolity, such as suited her Mexican nature, which age had not wholly altered.

The children's impatience at delay was overruled. Indeed, the affair proved to be one to be

forever remembered, for the *fiesta* lasted more than three days; so that it was well along in the morning of the fourth day before the guests for whom the holiday was made were allowed to depart. Even then, they did not go alone. Two young men acted as guides to direct them whither the Burnhams had probably encamped. Paula, also, went; riding an ancient and most sedate burro, as black as her own hair that even yet had not a thread of white mixed in it.

When they had been bidden a last, grave farewell by the assembled Pueblos, the children were led out upon the terrace and there a fresh surprise awaited them.

"What is this? Why—what?" asked Carlota, her eyes shining with anticipation, for, by the instincts of her own generous heart, she already guessed the truth.

Paula laughed, like one who had suddenly regained her youth, and answered gayly:

"One wouldn't wish the mouse-colored, blazed-face burro die of loneliness by the way, is it not?"

"Tell me, quick, quick! Oh! Paula, tell!"

"That grown up baby, Dennis! Soul of my life, what has he to do with a horse? A

pack-donkey is even too good for one who would run a friend through with a knife, yes."

"But the beautiful horse, Paula, what of him?"

"Shall one of the Master's children ride and not the other? 'Tis a fine animal, he chose well from the wildings, and he conquered the wildness well. It befits that to the finder the spoils. So the council now decree. *Ha!* 'Tis a proud, handsome lad; he they would have made a Pueblo brave! I—I wish—if my poor Pablo—"

Carlota's arms were around the old mother's neck and she was kissing away the gloom which rested on the wrinkled face, crying:

"Ah! dear Paula! You have been so good to us! Up in her Heaven my happy mother must know and love you for the help you have given her straying children. And we will find him, that Pablo you love. Miguel and many shall hunt for him everywhere, and when he is found he shall be led to you here. Believe me, he shall. And for the rest—thank you, thank you, thank you!"

"In truth then, should I die in peace. If he were here he would be safe. The Pueblos

honor the 'touched of God.' Alas! the *Americanos* taunt and jeer them."

"Believe me. I feel—I know—he will come back to you some day, and soon."

Gayly, they rode forward all that day and toward sunset had come so far into the mountains that the guides could clearly point their further route. They halted in a beautiful spot, where there was abundant water and verdure, and they had their packs well-filled by their recent hosts. Yet, with the deep emotions of those who live close to nature, they long lingered over the parting; and even Dennis, on his new and quiet mount, appeared thoughtful and serious. He seemed either to have adopted the silence of his Indian escort or to be afflicted by the prospect of another journey into unknown places and dangers.

Carlota had her botany-box piled with her other belongings upon her burro, and though Carlos had left his own cherished hammer in the Burnham's wagon, he had been given another of Indian shaping which, because of its flint-stone head, he thought far superior. Said Carlota, as she sat down by the old woman on a boulder:

"You see, Paula, we, too, are 'prospecting,' same as our father did. The good Burnhams hope to find some traces somewhere of gold, or silver, or something else that would mean money. I know many sorts of flowers that bloom in mining lands. That is, I know about them, for my father told me. He showed me pictures, too, that he himself had painted. I could tell the real ones in a minute, if I only could find some. Then Mr. Burnham could pay back to the rich old lady, that lives away off, all the debt he owes her and that he calls his 'life's burden.' We would be doing good if we could help him, and to do good is all it's worth living for, my father says."

"Would that I might see him! That blessed Master."

"Oh! you will. When you come to Refugio, as we planned."

Paula sighed. Then she caught up the little brown hand and laid it against her own, far browner from age and wrinkled like a shriveled fruit.

"To the grave is far, when one is young, but the way is short for me. However, is it flowers and gold? *Hola!* There is far better in these

mountains. My husband often told me. Sometimes, also, he would bring me a bit of that stuff. With it he would make a brave fire, great heat and dancing flames. Ah! yes. He should be rich, he said; then he would take me back to my birth-town and we would sport it with the best. Then the cruel bull gored him to death and here am I. Ah! life is strange, but death is stranger. Else, had my husband, who was wise, have lived; and the son who knows naught but—"

More to divert the woman's thoughts than because she had really heeded what had been said, Carlota begged for a further talk about the wondrous "stuff" which would burn and warm old blood to youth again and which painted flame-pictures for men to see.

"*Ay de mi.*[1] Cared I for that? Well, then, for love I had left that birth-town and with love I was content. Nothing else mattered. I—a woman is so foolish! Dearer to me were the flowers my husband brought and thrust in my dark hair than the ugly black stuff he burned."

Paula observed that the young men had

[1] Woe is me.

turned their faces homeward and were impatiently waiting for her to join them. They dared not hasten her by words, for their tribe held age in honor, and she was held to be wise beyond most. But she would delay just a bit longer and amuse the pretty child who begged a tale of a flower; then farewell! forever.

"What color had those blossoms, Paula? If red or yellow they must have been brave in your dark hair. Tell me, so that when I find one I can say: 'This is for dear Paula,' and put it in my own curls—if it will stay there."

The woman laughed, well pleased.

"Will you, *niña?* I love you, for your own sweet face and because you are your mother's child. The flowers? *Si.* Wear them, wear them, always. They are better for you than for me. They are blue and fit well your fairness. Blue and shaped—thus."

She took a small leaf and with deft, love-taught fingers fashioned a simple model which, to the plant-wise Carlota, suggested a blossom she could readily identify. Then she swiftly rose and clasped the child in her arms, saying:

"*Adios,* beloved, sun-gleam on a darkened life. May angels go with each step on the way

until the father you miss shall clasp you close again. *Adios!*"

The little girl felt a desolate heart-sinking as the three Pueblos almost immediately disappeared. Then she reproached herself for tears, since Carlos was with her, safe and free, and now the jubilant possessor of a beautiful horse that was, in truth, "almost as handsome as Benoni," and which was, hereafter, to bear that beloved creature's own name though he could never take the old Benoni's place.

There was nothing to fear, now. The guides had taught Dennis how to draw the tethers around a bit of ground in such a manner as to keep all reptiles from intruding upon this circular space where the wanderers would safely sleep. Carlota began to watch the Irishman at his labors and, idly, to study the ground he enclosed. A last ray of sunlight stole through the branches overhead and touched to glory a bit of herbage almost at her very feet. Touched one fragment of it that, seeing, the child was thrilled to intense surprise and stared so long and so fixedly, that, at last, Carlos teasingly cried:

"Why, little sister, you look as if you were seeing ghosts!"

With a little gasp she aroused from her revery and answered very gravely:

"Carlos, I believe I am!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

AT THE POINT OF DEATH

Carlota was awakened by the sun shining upon her face and Connemara nibbling at her curls. She sprang up, confused by her new surroundings, then laughed aloud at the beauty of the morning. The loneliness of the last evening had vanished and she was ready for whatever might come. First, for a frolic with Carlos or Dennis.

These two yet lay sleeping, their feet toward the ashes of their bedtime fire and their heads almost touching the ring of prickly, horsehair ropes which marked out their tiny camp; and over which, the Pueblos had assured them, no reptile of delicate skin would crawl.

In a mood to tease, Carlota now picked up these tethers and started to bind her brother's hands with them. The first touch roused him and, finding what she would be at, he entered so noisily into the fun that Dennis, also, awoke.

"Whist! to ye. Sure, now's not the time to be stirrin' yet, is it?"

"Quite time, good Dennis. How is the arm? How did you sleep? Did you hear any of the wild beasts that you imagined were going to surround us?"

"Never a one did I, but a thankful man I'll be, more by token, when I feels a good roof overhead once more. Not an Injun roof but a fine Christian sort. Arrah musha! 'Tis a load, is this barrowful o' mud them queer people have piled on me arm, so it is!"

"Dennis! Dennis, the Grumbler! If it wasn't a 'good Christian roof' you've slept under these last few nights, I don't know what you'd call one. You went to that pueblo with murder in your heart and its owners treated you—splendidly. They fed you, nursed you, and mended you—bones and clothes. For you were a rough sight, my Dennis, till Paula sewed up the rips you'd given your grand attire in struggling with Cork. Poor Cork! to be 'swopped' for a—mule!"

"Sure, a burro's no mule. A burro's a donkey; an' a donkey is a sweet little beast, like they have in old Ireland. But the creatur's no

name, so that job must be done over again, belike."

"Oh! if you 'swopped' animals, you must have 'swopped' names. I got Carlota to ask and this one's name is a wicked one, Dennis, it's '*Diablo,*'" said Carlos.

"Yes, I know, I know, I was hearin' that same but I'll not have it. No, indeed. Troth, no name at all is better nor a bad one."

"I'll tell you. Call him 'Captain' after the real Captain who was so kind to us. I'm afraid he isn't a good tempered beast, but that doesn't matter. He'll have plenty of work to do, here in the mountains, and—I'm hungry! Dennis, shall I wash your face for you, or can you do it for yourself with your well hand?" asked Carlota.

"Wash me face! Wash—me—face? An' sure is it dirty?"

"Dirty? Of course, it is. Haven't you been asleep? Isn't it morning? Doesn't everybody need to freshen themselves after sleeping? I don't think you're really awake yet."

"Arrah musha! But I'm more nor wide awake enough than to be lettin' the likes o' yourself do such a service for the poor lad

from Connemara. Och! the purty thackeen!"

Fortunately the broken arm was not the right one, therefore Dennis could do most needful things for himself and soon grew so "handy with one hand" that he also did much for the others.

All during their happy and simple breakfast which they ate by the spring, Carlos observed his sister's eyes continually roving over the ground and, finally, he asked:

"For what are you looking, girlie? Have you lost anything?"

"Yes, and no. I'm looking for something I thought I saw, last night. Something about which old Paula told me. I was sure I saw it—one—just after she went away; but, I don't see it now, and maybe I only dreamed it."

"Well, if you've finished breakfast we must be off. I'm afraid the Burnhams will think we are lost, for good."

"Maybe we were!" said Carlota, mysteriously.

"What do you mean?"

"You said 'lost for good.' It may prove the best kind of good to them and everybody."

"I don't see how," returned the lad, who hated "riddles."

"By and by, I'll tell you—if there's anything to tell. I'm keeping my eyes open, as our father bade us. He said that the habit of observing everything and calling nothing a trifle —Why, sometimes some of the little bits of things led up to the very, very biggest ones. It was a little thing Paula told me about, and I'm watching for it."

"And I'm on the watch for the camp! Come on. I'll put all the saddles on. They're a nuisance. I'd rather ride without any, only it didn't seem polite to say so when the Pueblos gave them to us."

"But, brother, they're not much of saddles. Not like that Dennis gave away with Cork. They're soft and blanket-y like, and I guess we're more comfortable with them. Which way, first?"

"Right on and up the canyon. The Indians said that it leads to some mining camps, and they thought we might find the Burnhams there. Or, anyway, hear news of them, if any of the miners have seen them. If there are any min-

ers left. If—if—if! I'm tired of 'ifs,' so let's hurry on!"

They set off, at once. They divided their simple luggage among them, the twins insisting that the disabled Dennis should take but the lightest portion upon his burro. Carlos rode first, leading the way and having some trouble with his new Benoni. Dennis followed next and Carlota last, that she might look out for him. For as she said, with a laugh:

"A broken-armed man must be handled with care! And, aren't you glad you learned to ride Cork, first? If you hadn't learned when you were well, you could hardly have managed to do so now."

"True for ye. But if this ain't the road that beats all! Faith, here's more stones nor ever I saw in me life!"

Indeed, that canyon was a rough place, and they followed toward its source the brawling stream that ran through it. Sometimes they were in the water, sometimes out of it. Sometimes they had to cling to the precipitous sides, leaving their animals to their own devices. Again, though rarely, they would reach a freer

space, where were myriads of flowers and tree-shaded nooks. They ate their mid-day meal at one such spot and here, for the first time, they found traces of other human beings.

Carlota was poking about among the blooming plants, scrutinizing each and selecting "specimens" for her box, when she caught sight of something blue and small.

"The flower! The flower!" she cried and ran to gather it.

But it was no flower. It was a torn scrap of coarse blue gingham.

At her cry, Dennis rushed forward. He was, as they told him, "centipede mad," and, at any unusual sound, his instant thought was of peril from the creeping thing.

"Where is it? Where? Wait till I beats the life out o' him, the nasty beast!"

She waved the bit of cloth before his eyes and he exclaimed:

"The tie-before o' the little gossoon!"

"What? What is it?" asked Carlos, running forward.

"Teddy!" answered his sister, holding out the scrap of cloth.

"It is! Surely. Yet—that wasn't torn today. It's been hanging there a good while. See the edges."

Carlota's heart sank, as she replied:

"When I saw it I thought we had only to call out and they would hear us. I almost fancied I could see the little fellow's face peeping at me from the very bush. Anyway, we must be on the right road and that does make it easier to go on."

It did, indeed. Each felt a renewed patience for the toilsome search, though they were not immediately to come upon any further trace of the family they sought. That night they slept within a rocky cove and Dennis dreamed of hobgoblins and "phookas," galore. His snores and outcries were so constant and disturbing that before daylight fairly came, all were awake and ready to move on.

The fact was that poor Dennis was growing feverish and somewhat light headed. His arm, in its heavy dressings, was painful and exceedingly heavy. His great boots cumbered him. He was homesick and full of forebodings; and, as the morning advanced, the twins felt seri-

ously alarmed. When they pressed him to take some food, he peevishly declined it, protesting:

"No. I don't want it. Take it away. Yes, I know, I know. Eatin's fine for them that likes it. Not for me. Arrah musha! We'll never find they we are seekin'. When I left Mr. Grady, 'Dennis,' says he, 'you're crazy,' says he. 'Ye'll die in them mountains,' says he, 'an' what'll I do for a neighbor to wrastle with, when home we goes to old Ireland an' yourself dead,' says he. Troth, that same was the truth he was speakin'."

Carlota was at her wits' end. Dennis obstinately refused to touch any food or to go onward another step.

"Dennis, Dennis! How silly to talk about a dead man's wrestling! and Dennis Fogarty! how *mean* to go and die—die—right in sight, almost, of our journey's end! I thought you loved your 'little lady,' dear Dennis. Do you s'pose my Miguel would do anything so—so disappointing as to go and die, just because he wouldn't eat, if I didn't want him to? No. In truth! He'd live a hundred years, first, like old Guadalupo. He would so!"

A faint fire flashed in the tired eyes of the ex-trackman. He had quite decided to die. He felt, that under existing circumstances, life was too much to expect of any man. "Little lady?" Yes. Of course he loved her. She needn't persist in taunting him with that wretched "Greaser." Besides, anyhow, she had Carlos. They were all in all to each other, those two. They didn't need him. His work was done. He had vindicated his manliness. He was very ill. Arrah musha! Very ill, indeed. Still, in the approved western style, he would "die with his boots on." But he would, he wanted to, they needn't—

"Look out! The lion—the lion!"

"Bang! Bang! Bang-bang-BANG!"

CHAPTER XXIX

CAMP BURNHAM

Never came mortal back to life so suddenly as Dennis! He was the first on his feet. His yells were keyed to a pitch and volume that would have terrified any lion which ever roamed the forest, and especially that timid, sneaking creature which assumes the name of a nobler animal. From the tree above the cowardly beast looked down upon the group. Its eyes gleamed wickedly, yet its whole lithe body quivered in fear, for it had been pursued to its own destruction.

"Bang! R-r-r-rip—flash—BANG!"

It fell at their very feet, so to speak, and then did Dennis believe that his hour had really come.

"Och! murder! me soul! That ever I should have lived—to die!" and, almost paralyzed by fright he, too, fell down.

With a mutual impulse of protection, the

children clung together, too startled for speech; and it was not until the lion, or puma, had been lifeless for some seconds that they released each other and peered into the forest whence the shot had come. Thence now, also, came the crashing of branches and soon there hurried into view—Mr. Burnham!

He paused, as astonished as they; then, with a shout of delight, the trio rushed together.

"Oh! have we found you?"

"Dear children! I might have killed you when I fired! How came you here?"

"But you didn't. You only killed the lion. Where are the rest? Is everybody well? Mrs. Burnham? Teddy? And Jack? Are you camping near? Can we go now? Did you think we were lost? Oh! we have been—but—"

Nobody thought of Dennis, for a moment, and he still lay, fancying himself dying. Then he heard the voices. One seemed strangely familiar, yet he was powerless to move till the station master comprehended who it was that lay huddled beside the dead puma, and called:

"Dennis! Dennis, are you hurt, lad?"

The ex-trackman groaned.

"Why—is it so? That's bad, indeed! Where are you wounded? Did I shoot you, or that creature spring upon you?"

"Och! I'm dead. I'm dead, entirely."

"Guess not. Try to get up. Why, what's the matter here, with your arm? This is no beast-scratch."

Both at once, the twins rapidly told their story and, by his own wit, the newcomer learned the main facts. He was very sorry for Dennis but felt that the Irishman's present collapse was due to fear and disappointment, rather than approaching death. He remembered that among the traits of his old employee was a fondness for good food, so urged:

"Come on, my fine fellow. The mistress is cooking such a supper yonder, in our little camp, as will put new life into your 'dead' limbs—instanter! Brook trout—broiled on wood coals; fresh biscuits; wild honey that Jack found in a tree; with cresses from the same stream that furnished the trout. How's that? Come. Get up. I'll help you. What a beautiful horse! Both burros yours? Ah! I recall—the Pueblos. Well, I must go. Letitia will be anxious. Every time any of us

move, now, she fears we're going forever. Come to supper, Dennis?"

"Yes, I know, I know. Thanky, but—I couldn't. No, I couldn't."

"Very well. Suit yourself. I'll lead your donkey forward and you follow when you choose."

Carlota was distressed and looked anxiously into Mr. Burnham's face; then caught a twinkle in his eye which belied his apparent indifference.

"What will you do about the puma?" asked Carlos, somewhat envious of the fine shooting which had brought down the animal.

"Leave it for the present. Its skin is worth coming back for but the good news of your return mustn't be kept from the others any longer. Come, all of you."

"This way? Straight ahead?"

"Yes. Where you see the trail divide—beyond that tree—a fork of it goes down into what appears to be a 'bottomless pit.' I have explored the gulch for a little distance, but found no traces of anything I sought. Thus far—it's all been seeking and no finding," finished Mr. Burnham, with a sigh.

"Well, it's only such a little while. Not many days yet."

"No, lad, but they've seemed long to my wife. Your safe return will put new life and courage into us all."

"I hope so," cheerfully responded Carlota.

But Carlos was silent. For them both and without consulting her again, he had decided that, after a brief stop with their friends, they would resume their own interrupted journey toward the "north" and the father they must find. Mr. Burnham observed the boy's silence but made no comment on it, and they started onward through the canyon leading the animals, for riding was both perilous and uncomfortable. They had speedily left the smooth glade where they had rested and met, and now the canyon walls rose sheer and almost impassable.

Carlota continually looked back and, at a moment when they paused to take breath, she whispered to her brother:

"I can't bear to leave good, kind Dennis there, alone. Maybe he is really dying! I must go back and see."

Carlos, also, peered into the dimness behind and nudged her. A creeping, awkward figure was following them, in a shame-faced way, as if unwilling to acknowledge his own mistaken statements—honest Dennis, very much alive!

"Poor fellow! He was really sick and feverish, terribly tired, and homesick for even such a place as Leopard or Tuttle—any spot where there were 'Christian roofs' and white-skinned people. As Paula called him, he's but a grown up baby, after all. You mustn't laugh at him, brother dear, when he comes up with us, nor act as if you remembered a bit of his foolishness. Promise."

"All right, Carlota. I don't promise—, but I'll take care."

So they went gayly on again, and it was the sound of their happy voices which brought mother and sons running down the slope from Camp Burnham to meet them. Letitia and Carlota clasped and reclasped one another, half-laughing, half-crying, and at first, too deeply moved for speech. But grave little Teddy neither laughed nor cried. He merely observed:

"Muvver, she did find the piece of my ap'on what I tored. She has got it in her jacket. Now you can mend it."

Then Carlota turned about and saw him standing, arms akimbo, in all the dignity of his first, rough little "camping-twousers," calm and unruffled, as if being lost and found again were but an ordinary incident of the day.

"You darling! Have you missed me? Missed your 'new sister,' Carlota?"

"Nope."

"O, Teddy! Why haven't you?"

"Been a-fishin'. Catched a fish an' cooked him. Teddy's hungwy. Come to supper."

Happy Mrs. Burnham seconded the request:

"Yes, come to supper, everybody! After that for a nice long talk, and everything told that's befallen you from the moment you left us till this. But, Jack? Why, where's Jack?"

He came, slipping and sliding down the steep behind the little clearing where they had pitched their tent, and where the white "schooner" now did duty as storehouse and general utility apartment.

"Hello! Master-cut-and-come-again! So you're back? Well, I'm glad of it. Need you

to help forage. Never saw such appetites as my relatives have. Father spends his time tapping and digging around in the ground, and the cares of providing fresh 'butcher's meat,' fresh fish, fresh fruit, fresh water, fresh everything—devolves upon yours truly. Say, I wish you'd sell me that lasso of yours. I need it. Honor bright. What'll you take? Oh, Carlota? You here? Howdy."

The overjoyed lad affected his usual indifference, yet, as he threw upon the ground before them the results of his afternoon with the rod and line, and his father's second-hand shot-gun, his honest pride made his homely features good to see.

"Where's my Dennis?" suddenly demanded Teddy.

"Coming, yonder. Run and meet him and tell him how glad you are to have him back," suggested Carlota.

Without comment, Teddy obeyed, and promptly brought the last member of the party to enjoy that famous supper. Nor, though they sat late around the camp-fire, exchanging confidences, did anybody mention the possibility of "dying."

CHAPTER XXX

THE BLUE FLOWER AND THE BLACK ROCK

"Yes, go, my dear, I don't want you to sit here alone, so constantly, or so continually to toil for somebody. Oh! you precious comfort! I should have died here, in the wilderness, but for your tender care!"

"No, no, Mrs. Burnham. Don't say that. I was here and I've done what I could. That's all. It's so good to know you are getting better!" answered Carlota, who was far less rosy and gay than when, so many weeks before, she had reached Camp Burnham, where they still remained.

On the morning after her arrival, Carlota had been awakened by a cry of alarm, and, half-aroused, had seen Mrs. Burnham unsteadily leaning against the wagon-end. A second later, the cry of pain was repeated and she saw the woman fall; and from that moment until now life had seemed a terrible dream.

The frail Letitia, upon whose cheerful self-sacrifice rested everybody's comfort, had suddenly collapsed. An old weakness of the heart had returned to strike her down at a moment, when it seemed to her, she could less be spared than ever before.

"Well, I've had to lie still. There was no help for it; and again, my dear, I say that I believe God sent you to me when you came. Inexperienced child though you were, your devotion and care have saved me."

A bed of pine boughs within a tent may not be the most luxurious of couches, yet had Mrs. Burnham chosen from all the world she could scarcely have selected a spot more conducive to recovery from such an illness. She now continued, looking around upon all her dear ones, clustered before the opening of her tent:

"You have done your helpful share, each one. But I am really much, much stronger, and I want Carlota to go off with her brother for a long, delightful day by themselves. Her berry-brown face is getting bleached by staying indoors—even in a canvas indoors—till it almost matches her hair. That won't do. Besides, since we haven't found here what we

sought, we must move on again very soon. This lovely spot has grown to be like home to me but—there are others just as fair."

"Oh! maybe Mr. Burnham will find his 'lucky stone' right here," said Carlota, radiant at thought of a long quiet day "by themselves" with her precious brother. She knew, too, by the way he looked at her, lately, that he had something especial to say to her and only waited an opportunity to say it. So, taking a little luncheon with her and promising that they would surely come back before dark, the girl set off to find her brother, lounging on the rocks below.

"Oh! how nice it is to be alone, quite by our two selves! They are so good to us, and yet—I—Carlos, do you ever think of Refugio now?"

"Think of it? All the time, almost. I'm as glad as you to come by ourselves, for we must have a talk. First—which way shall we go?"

"Down the canyon to the bend in it and that other terrible rocky fork of it. I saw something. Oh! I saw something!" said Carlota, mysteriously.

With their arms about each other's shoul-

ders they gayly ran to that strange rift in the mountain side, which disclosed its heart of rock. There they sat down upon a jutting bowlder to gaze into the awful depths.

"It's the most—most fascination place I ever saw."

"Pooh! Fascinating is what you mean. You quite make me ashamed, sometimes, Carlota, when you forget to be proper in your speech."

She accepted the reproof with perfect good humor:

"Do I? That's too bad. But never mind it now. Carlos, do you see anything—very wonderful—down in that—abyss? Is that the right word, darling?"

Not being himself sure he evaded the question.

"It's the strangest canyon I ever saw. Looks as if some mighty giants had taken monstrous sledge-hammers and split the mountain in two. As if all its insides were those curious, dark stones. But such giants, Carlota! They must have been able to reach to the sky; and their hammers would, surely, have weighed a thousand thousand tons!"

"O, Carlos! They couldn't be so big!"

"Did I say they were? I said—do pay attention, Carlota, and not stare down there so! If you had more imag—imagernation, little sister, you would have more enjoyment."

"Would I? Seems you aren't 'talking' much, only finding out things I ought to do. Carlos, I'm going down to the bottomest bottom of that place!" and, leaning forward, she pointed toward the awful chasm.

"Hmm. Then I guess we'd best begin to talk. Say, dear, we can go away now, to find our father."

"When? And leave poor Mrs. Burnham?"

"Right away. The very next to-morrow that's coming. She's 'most well; she says so; and besides, though you didn't know it, they are nearly out of food and have no money to buy more—even if there were a place to buy it in." His voice was dramatically earnest.

"Why, there's all that heap and heap of cans."

"Empty, Carlota. *All empty!*"

"They can't be. They're standing up all tight and straight in that cool place by the spring. I saw Mr. Burnham fix them."

"Dear, that was to deceive his wife. True. The cans are empty. We're everyone of us so hungry except her, you see, and we've eaten and eaten! There wasn't much to begin with; and he knows that if she thought there was danger of the food giving out it would kill her. She is so very weak. There are the fish, but fish three times a day! I'd like a chicken, wouldn't you, Carlota? Or a loaf of Marta's bread?"

"Don't, please don't, brother! I'm so—so —terr'ble homesick!"

"I'm afraid that, even now, Mr. Burnham thinks his wife will never live to go out of these mountains. He's all discouraged. Last night he said to Jack, that if something wasn't done soon we'd all starve. So *we* must go away. We'll find our father, or if not him quick enough, then somebody else who'll send them help. Wasn't it a pity they ever left Tuttle? There they had enough to eat and, pleasant as it is here, they were near folks. Mountains are nice, but, Carlota, I like folks best."

"Well, so do I. But I love mountains, too. I love—I guess I love everything there is. And I'm going down into that canyon—if I

can. Come with me, because I see something! I see—something—and if we go away it is my last chance. I promised Paula—Come. Let's. Now."

He was willing, for care sat lightly upon him, as upon her; and in another moment both had forgotten it entirely. For their inspection of the chasm was hastened by an accident which drove all other matters out of mind.

There was, apparently, an easy point of descent a few yards from where they had been sitting, peering over the abyss. Intermingling grasses and shrubs grew at the top, upon seemingly solid ground; but as they touched it, still walking hand in hand, it gave way beneath their weight and they felt themselves slipping, sliding, sinking—they knew not whither.

Carlota's face blanched, but she did not cry out. Probably, she did not realize the extent of their danger as her brother did, for he had grown more familiar with the region and knew how full it was of "man-traps" and hidden perils. Yet, at the first instant of danger, his heroism roused:

"Don't fear, Carlota! Try—to slide—slow

—hold yourself—back—keep hold of me—and —*Say your prayers, quick!*"

God does not desert those who put their trust in him. The children reached the end of that terrible slide in safety. The whole downward passage had been made smooth for them, as it were, by the bed of a once rapid waterfall. Into this channel had now washed dirt, seeded with the rich vegetation of the spot. The seeds had found still a little moisture, had sprung to life, and had thus prepared a natural carpet over which the imperilled ones passed to the bottom. But, even thus, their fall was so sudden and swift that, for some time after it was over they lay crouched and breathless, failing to realize that they were still unhurt.

Then they looked up and shuddered! At any other point they would, inevitably, have been torn or mangled. But Carlota's faith was not disturbed by this, which her brother saw and suggested.

"But—it *wasn't* at any other point, Carlos! It wasn't. It was just right there where we would be safe. God knew. He took all the

care. And—Carlos! Carlos, see there! *See there!*"

She forgot her shaken nerves and trembling limbs as she now sprang to her feet and eagerly pointed forward.

"Well, what, dear? I see nothing but a patch of queer blue blossoms. You are flower-crazy, I do believe. Was it for them you wanted to come down?"

"Yes, yes, oh! yes. Why—don't you yet understand? It is old Paula's flower! That always grows where the black stuff is; the stuff which makes a flame and warms the people! See! There's some of the stone, too. Oh! joy, joy! We've found what our father said was as good and benefaction-y as any gold mine! What he was trying to find for the rich men. This is the flower he told me of, the same kind that Paula knew. Where it grows —Break off some of the black rock, brother! Quick! Then let's get back to the top. We've found a mine! *We — have — found — a — Mine!*"

CHAPTER XXXI

IN THE HOSPITAL

In a private room of a New York hospital, a pale, pain-worn man lay resting upon his pillows. The surgeons said that he was almost fit for discharge, and there was the gleam of returning health in his dark eyes and a faint color in the firm lips beneath the heavy moustache.

He had been looking through his window toward the western sky, but his thoughts were not upon it, and he scarcely heard his nurse when she entered. Ill as he would have appeared to anybody who had known him in his vigor, his present state and progress were satisfactory to her. She announced her arrival by asking:

"Well, Mr. Manuel, have you been sleeping any?"

"Thank you, no. I've just been dreaming, Miss Burnham. I'm very homesick; very

restless and anxious to see my children."

"That's good. I like to hear my patients talk like that. It's a certain sign of improvement when their interest in things returns. Such an evidence of strength on your part that, if you wish, I will read to you whatever you fancy. I'm sure you are able to listen and enjoy news now."

"Can't I do that for myself? Though the doctor did forbid me to use my eyes much yet."

"Quite right he was. 'Make haste slowly' and you'll not regret it."

"Haste! when I've been here for months!"

"Better for months than for life—or death. What shall I begin with?" she answered, opening the evening paper as she spoke.

"Of course, any western, or southwestern, news first. The nearest home."

"It's matter that interests me, also. I've a brother in the southwest; a station master on a railway. Some day, when I can, I'm going out to see him. Ha! Here's something. I'm always attracted by 'scare headlines,' and this article should please you, too, since it's all about children and you seem so fond of them."

She let her eyes skim the column then exclaimed:

"This is a real fairy tale of wonderful happenings and touches somewhat upon your own line of business. It is forwarded by a special correspondent:

"'Albuquerque, July 17th, 18—. Discovery of a magnificent mine of the finest anthracite coal. The discoverers are children under thirteen years of age.'"

"Humph!" exclaimed the convalescent, with doubting emphasis.

"The story of this find is as marvellous as any tale of romance and the childish discoverers are New Mexican twins. They were born somewhere on the border of the United States and Mexico and have always lived there. Their father is in the business of prospecting, or locating, mines for a syndicate of wealthy men, and had trained the children to that observation of 'little things' which he himself exercised. The little girl knew that a certain flowering plant grows only where coal is to be found, and her twin brother had enough knowl-

edge of geology to verify the discovery. The father of the children, Mr. Adrian Manuel—"

The newspaper dropped from the reader's hand, and she turned to her patient in swift alarm. In his still weak state she dreaded the effect of these unexpected tidings, but he rallied from the startled silence in which he had listened, and begged:

"Go on! Oh! go on—go on!"

"Mr. Adrian Manuel had, for some unexplained reason, left his home for a trip to the 'north,' leaving his children in the charge of his household, supposed to be devoted to him. Yet, in some manner, the youngsters learned that some strangers who had come to their home in their father's absence were his 'enemies' and would either spirit them away from their home and him, or work them some other harm. With a faith as great as their ignorance, they set out to 'find their father.' Needless to say that they have failed; though the publicity given their discovery may, also, discover the lost parent.

"They have had lots of adventures, have been in a 'norther,' an Apache raid, a Pueblo village, a visionary miner's camp, etc., etc.

Indeed, it was at this last stopping-place, while under the care of the miner Burnham's family—"

Again the paper fell. There was a queer sensation about the nurse's own heart. Burnham? Her brother? It might be he!

Mr. Manuel could not wait for her recovery, but seized the paper and finished the article for himself, and aloud. He was excited, yet not hurtfully so. Pride, amazement, infinite gratitude thrilled in his tones. When he finished the nurse and her patient could only stare at one another in silence. Then habit asserted itself and she sternly inquired:

"Mr. Manuel, did you do this—leave home without telling your people where you were going and for what?"

Heretofore, he had been ill, meek and submissive. Now he had suddenly recovered. He grew quite bold and self-assertive, and thus convinced the nurse that he was indeed uninjured by this first, startling "news from home."

"Yes. I now see what a foolish thing it was, but it didn't seem so then. There was so much uncertainty—But I can't talk! I'm well, and

—Why in the world hasn't Miguel been here? Or has he? His letter of instructions, it's past time for opening that—I told him he needn't write unless trouble happened. I was determined to recover if human will could aid the surgeons and I knew that to hear often from Refugio would tend to make me restless and so hinder my progress. There was plenty of money and it is a land where money counts for less than friendliness."

"Why hasn't the manager been here? Probably because that, after he read your letter, he realized how much depended on your peace of mind, which your knowledge of the children's loss would utterly destroy. He loved you too well to kill you outright."

"But why, then, if my children were in an Apache outbreak—the men who rescued them —since they must have been rescued—Oh! it's all a dreadful muddle. Somebody should have put that into the papers—"

"Maybe that was done. How should we know? You've been in hospital for more than two months. During all that time until to-day you have neither read for yourself nor listened to reading. In any case, the advertising col-

umns of the daily press are the last things which I, in my busy life, have time for perusing. But—about that Burnham. I know he is my brother. Do you believe he can effect a claim to any part of that mine? or—oh! I forgot!"

He smiled gayly.

"I don't want you to forget. I want you to remember. And—I am going to Albuquerque. I start to-night. I've thought the details out, already. You are going with me, and on the same train with the young doctor, that interne, who has been so faithful and who needs a vacation almost as badly as you do. The trip will be glorious. We'll surprise them all. Our interests are mutual. I understand all the red-tapeism of settling the claims to this discovery. What do you say?"

She was a woman growing old in her beneficent but toilsome life. The thought of seeing that distant family to which her heart so often turned was tempting. Besides, when this present patient left her care, it would be time for her vacation. She was resourceful, and deliberated but a moment.

"Yes. We'll go. All of us."

"That's good of you. Thus, under the care of my doctor and my nurse, I can make the trip in safety, even though I've not yet received my hospital discharge. Well, if we're going, as my little Carlota would say—'Let's!' "

CHAPTER XXXII

IN MY LADY'S CHAMBER

"Patterson! Patterson!! Pat-ter—son!!!"

The cane in the old lady's hand came down with a thump. It signified: "Attention!"

For a moment or more there was no response to the summons. Then the irate owner of the cane bounced out of her chair and rushed about the room, in a half-frantic manner. She picked up one article only to toss it aside and seize another; but all the time, she tightly clutched the newspaper she held. In her excitement she had once half-folded the paper and had then drawn her thin fingers down its folds as if to make it into a staff or mammoth taper.

Presently, the door opened and a stout woman entered this richly furnished bedchamber, whereupon the old lady rushed toward her and fairly flourished the paper in the new-

comer's face, who was not a whit disturbed by the onslaught and calmly advised:

"There, Mrs. Sinclair, that will do. I wouldn't go for to put myself in a rage if I was you. You'd far better sit down and take your drops."

"Patterson, where were you?"

"Eating my tea."

"You're always 'eating your tea.' I wonder how you manage the feat. It's one beyond my wit."

"Yes, ma'am. I dare say it is."

"Patterson, you are impertinent."

"Not meanin' it, ma'am, I'm sure."

"No. You never do mean anything. That's the worst of you. If I hadn't grown so accustomed to you—You know what would happen, I reckon.

"Yes, ma'am. You've often told me," answered the maid, still undisturbed.

"Well, *I* generally *do* mean something. Just now, it's something which, probably, will astonish even you—if that is possible."

"Yes, ma'am. I think I could be astonished if I tried."

"Huh! I doubt it. But—try. It would be

such a novel sensation. Why, woman alive, if it weren't for my sensations I'd be as wooden-y as you are. Patterson, I'm going to Albuquerque."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Oh! you exasperating creature! But—I've just come from there. A few weeks ago, on our way back from California. That's the name of that curious old town that's so antique on one side and so horribly new on the other. Yes, I'm going to Al-bu-quer-que. Why don't you ask me what for?"

"You'll be sure to tell me, directly, ma'am."

"Humph! You *are* impertinent. I have always known it. I consider you so when you don't get excited."

"I'm sorry, ma'am."

"No, you're not. Not a bit sorry. You didn't get excited even when I told you I'd bought our tickets for a trip around the world. Nothing on the trip excited you. Even when I talked anarchy in Russia and had to keep my tongue so still afterward. You're not excited now, yet—if I chose—I could say that which would make even your smooth hair stand up and ruffle itself."

"I dare say so, ma'am."

"Patterson, am I a happy woman?"

"I'm afraid not, ma'am."

"Haven't I done a lot of good in my life?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I've had bitter sorrows. They've made me—disagreeable, eh? Well, listen. Once a man borrowed my money and died without paying it. Because of that debt, which I half-forgot, and their silly notions of honor his family have always been poor. I didn't know they worried so—until it was too late. Then I let it go on. It was less trouble than the other way. And exertion is good for—other people. Patterson! leave tidying this room and sit down."

"Yes, ma'am. It often is 'too late' in this world."

"Why—Patterson! I say, leave tidying the room. You're always at it when you aren't 'eating your tea,' and I've something to tell you, Patterson! *Sit down!* I bid you. I've that to tell you that will, that must, wake you up at last."

"Yes, ma'am," and something in her mistress's manner did catch the attention of this

faithful old servant, of long service and short speech.

"Good Patterson—Do you remember Mary?"

Then, indeed, did the "worm turn."

"Remember Mary? How can you ask me that? Wasn't I her nurse? Wasn't she the sweetest girl who ever lived? Didn't I love her like my own soul? Ah! indeed, but I do remember Mary. It was I who dressed her for her wedding, which you'd forbidden. *Do I —remember—Mary?*"

"There, there. That was fine. Magnificent. I thought there was fire in you somewhere, if a body only had gunpowder enough about her to set it flashing. Well—I, too, remember Mary. Ah! Patterson! how well!"

Only one who knew the erratic Mrs. Sinclair, as Patterson knew her, could have understood that sudden change in her manner which bespoke a broken heart. "Mary." The never forgotten, the always beloved, the forever mourned. In that love and in that self-reproachful memory, lay the secret of this strange and restless life.

The little old lady, whose face was wizened

and wan, dropped into her chair and Patterson went and stood beside her.

"There, ma'am. I wouldn't. It's all past and gone. There's still a heaven where you can meet her, even though, as you said, it's too late for this world."

Mrs. Sinclair bobbed her head, then looked up with a gleam in her eye. "It was you who said that, Patterson."

"Was it, ma'am? I don't remember that."

"Listen. When I came home from the Pacific, as usual, I got out at all the stations to rest myself."

"Yes, ma'am."

"At one of them, called Tuttle, which was just a man or two, a water-tank and a house, with a few other folks thrown in—at this wretched spot I saw—two children."

"So you said, ma'am."

"Excuse me, I said nothing of the kind. I never mentioned it. *Somebody* said they were Indian captives, just rescued. When I looked at them something went through my heart like a shot. Those children made me think of Mary. They had eyes like Mary's And—

Patterson, sit down. You'll need support now."

Patterson immediately dropped upon a lounge, but continued to dust little portions of the furniture near, with a silk rag she pulled from her pocket and went nowhere without. But she suddenly ceased her labor and—waked up entirely!

"Hear this Associated Press dispatch. I was right. Those little 'captives' I saw are my Mary's children. It all fits together like a sliced puzzle—when once you start it right. Hark!"

Then in her clear tones, still unimpaired by age, and in an excitement that was now really healthful, Mrs. Sinclair read to her old attendant the same account of the famous "Discovery" which the hospital nurse had read to her convalescing patient.

She read it once at almost breakneck speed, then again, more slowly; and at its conclusion, Patterson stood beside the door leading into the dressing room, impatient to be gone.

"Patterson, where are you? What are you about? *Why don't you—sit down?* Where can

you be going in such frightful haste? Eh? What did you say?"

"To pack our trunks. *I'm* going to Albuquerque."

"Ha! Wide awake at last! You're right. *We* are going by the first express, to Mary's children at Albuquerque!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

REFUGIO ONCE MORE

Mr. Rupert Disbrow so excitedly sprang from his chair and threw down the evening paper that his father, calmly reading his own *Gazette* at the other side of the library table, ejaculated:

"Rupert, what has become of your self-control? My nerves—They were bad enough before we took that wretched trip to the jumping-off-place of creation, but now—I must have quiet and rest, at least in my own house."

"But a little excitement of the right sort, will do you good, father. Listen, please. I'll read you something and try to do so quietly."

"You act queerly, for a lawyer—"

"Yes, a lawyer, of course; but first—a man. I defy anybody to be composed, who has had the experience we've had, chasing over half this wide country in pursuit of something and

returning to find it right here in his own library—''

Now seriously alarmed by the strange manner of his usually sedate son, the elder gentleman rose to ring the bell and send for his man, feeling that he would know, at once, if aught were seriously amiss with the ''boy,'' who acted as if he, too, had caught the fever which had detained them so long in the southwest and from which the father had nearly died.

''That's all right. Ring, if you need anything for yourself, but I—well, I'll just wire a few words to Mrs. Sinclair, then read you what will make you stare.''

''Rupert, for peace's sake, don't stir up that old woman, to-night. We're not at the office and it's past business hours—''

''Beg pardon, father, but it's a case of 'needs must.' And I won't stop to wire. Since you've summoned your man I'll send the message direct to her house.'

The messenger was hastily dispatched and then the younger lawyer read that same ''Associated Press'' article which had already startled so many other people into hasty action. When it was finished, Mr. George Disbrow

leaned back and sighed in vast relief, saying:

"Well! If anything in this topsy-turvy world could surprise me that story would. It seems incredible, but I'm only too thankful to believe it. It will 'settle' our whimsical client as nothing less amazing would; and end for us a 'case' that has been much more plague than profit."

"But how strange that Mr. Manuel has never been heard from! What is your theory in the matter?'

"A capable lawyer never indulges in theories. He sticks to facts. What now?"

A servant entered and delivered a note to the old gentleman, who took it, protesting against further disturbance of his rest time. Then, as he recognized the handwriting on the envelope, his expression altered to one as excited as that of his son.

"Of all things! A note from the very man we were discussing and at the very moment! Hear this:

" 'My Dear Sir:

'Having for some months been absent from my home, in hospital in this city and extremely

ill, I knew nothing of what has transpired at Refugio until to-night. I refer you to the evening papers to explain why I start for Albuquerque, immediately, without delaying to call upon you at your office. I will communicate with you from that town.

'Yours truly, ADRIAN MANUEL.' ''

"Well, father, I think that's decent of the gentleman, and satisfactory. He always has been punctilious and correct in his few dealings with us. I'll write that Miguel. Theirs is an out of the way place, but a letter will reach there—give it time. Hold on! I've an idea. Business isn't pressing at this season of the year, and I'll run out to Albuquerque myself. I'd give a big sum to see those children safe again and make them understand I'm not the terrible ogre who so nearly scared them to death. Was that another knock? Yes. Come in."

It was his own messenger, returned, bringing him a reply, short and sharp, like its writer:

"Yours received. I'm taking matters into

my own hands. I leave for Albuquerque on the seven o'clock, limited. Mary Sinclair."

"Good for the old lady! I'll meet her on the train. We'll journey together to Albuquerque."

So there came a goodly company winding down from the hills into the valley of Refugio. Never, since the days of the old Padres, had such a cavalcade appeared there, seeking shelter in the blessed House of Refuge.

Old Guadalupo, still basking in the sun before the kitchen door, blinked and called to Marta:

"Put on the pot, old woman! Bring your guitar and sing your shrillest. They are coming! By the ears of my spirit I hear them."

Too glad to hobble, as she used to do, Marta flew to the threshold. Age seemed to have left and joy transformed her.

"Ah, soul of my life, I have, I have! Already, there is seethed the flesh of the kid, and there are baked the cakes and sweeties that my children love. Loaves? Why, heart's dearest,

you have never seen such loaves! But, Anita? An-i-ta!'

"Well, then, *madre mia,* what is it?"

"Where is that boy, Miguel?"

Coquettish for the first time since these many, many days, the maid shrugged her pretty shoulders and settled a rose in her dark hair, as she answered:

"Where? How should I know?"

"Know? Since he returned from that unhappy search of his—know? Why, minion, you know more of my boy, Miguel, now-a-days, than the mother who bore him. Yet, mark my words! He has a temper! Ah! yes. When you are his wife, let the folds of his silken shirt be creased the wrong way but once and I tell you— Oh! Have a care!"

"For a woman, breathless, there are many words, *madre.* But I am glad to know. That shirt—it shall be ever rightly creased. *Si.* But to-day he has no eyes for me. He has already gone, flown upon that Amador, to meet those who come. I? I cannot wait! How can I? Nor—need I! For—they come, they come! *Hola!* But the House of Refuge will be full this night! and the *fiesta* we will make

shall last for days and days. Behold, my mother, what a company is this that comes from Albuquerque!"

"Where is that Pablo? Here. He shall stand here with us. Is every *vaquero* in place? Fall into line, there! For not a single soul upon the Master's rancho shall fail to bid him welcome when he comes once more unto his own. I have said it, I, Anita. So it must be. And now— They come! Give them true Spanish welcome—lusty and from the heart: *Bien Venido! Bien! BIEN!!*"[1]

Truly, they had "come." Adrian Manuel, his children on either side; the Burnhams, "root and branch"; Rupert Disbrow, glad as a boy to be back at Refugio in such happy times; Patterson of the terse speech and loyal heart; Mistress Mary Sinclair, riding in a carriage of honor, gay as a girl, forgiving and forgiven, at last one with the family for whom her soul had pined; Dennis, in gorgeous garb, befitting a gentleman of Connemara; and last, a woman in Pueblo dress—Paula; whose keen eyes saw her son restored—Pablo, the Dancer.

But, as this joyful company neared the old

[1] Welcome! Good! Good!

Mission, it diverged to a sunny spot, marvellously cared for and rich in blooming plants and waving palms. There Adrian Manuel and his children leaped down, to kneel in that beloved place where the Lady of Refugio slept; and, understanding without words, the last bitterness passed from old Mary Sinclair's heart as she silently stepped down and also reverently knelt beside the trio.

It was a mute petition to the living and the dead; and the living answered for the dead, as Carlota folded her arms about the aged woman and kissed her—"for Mary."

THE END

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